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Psychosocial Correlates of Self-Reported Coping Among Japanese Americans Interned During World War II

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This study investigated psychosocial correlates of self-reported internment coping among Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II. Economic, physical, emotional, and total coping were assessed in relation to demographics, distal internment characteristics (age interned and length of internment), proximal internment variables (internment talk with parents, negative internment communications and emotions, in-group preference and associations), and individual personality variables (self-esteem and locus of control). Although relationships with distal variables were nonsignificant, proximal variables of negative communications and emotions and preference for Japanese Americans were significantly associated with coping reports. Self-esteem, locus of control, and income were partial mediators of internment coping ratings. Findings are discussed in relation to the complexities of assessing long-term coping responses to historical trauma.

Keywords: trauma, coping, Japanese Americans, internment

Shortly after Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, authorizing the imprisonment of all persons of Japanese ancestry living in western portions of the United States. As a result, 120,000 Japanese Americans, two thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, were ordered into concentration camps for an average of 2 to 3 years. Although the mass internment was portrayed at the time as a military necessity, a 1980 governmental investigation revealed that the internment was a "grave injustice" and that there had not been a single documented act of disloyalty committed by a Japanese American (Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians [CWRIC], 1997).

The consequences of forced incarceration extended beyond issues of injustice. Family heirlooms and icons of Japanese cultural heritage became potential symbols of disloyalty in the weeks after Pearl Harbor and were either confiscated by the government or destroyed by Japanese Americans themselves (Nagata, 1998). Internees took only what they could carry and suffered significant financial losses. Not knowing where they were going or their prospects for the future, many feared for their lives as they boarded "evacuation" trains, surrounded by armed guards and drawn window shades. These traumas were compounded by the stress of being labeled as potentially disloyal without regard for citizenship or past behavior.

Conflicts between American and Japanese identities were felt most keenly by the "Nisei" generation. The term *Nisei* refers to the first generation of Japanese Americans born in the United States. Largely teenagers and young adults during World War II, the Nisei represented the largest generational cohort of U.S.-born internees. Their experiences are central in understanding the long-term effects of the wartime incarceration and therefore are the focus for the present study.

Traumas created by intentional human design such as the internment can have psychological consequences that are more enduring than those associated with natural disasters or accidents (Loo, 1993). Although most Nisei led successful lives after their wartime incarceration, negative psychological consequences were reflected in the postwar loss of self-esteem, feelings of undeserved shame, and self-consciousness experienced by many (Mass, 1986; Nagata, 1998). Some developed a longstanding mistrust of European Americans and associated primarily with fellow Japanese Americans; others avoided associating with Japanese Americans and Japanese culture (Mass, 1986). Intergenerational effects observed among the Niseis' children who were born after the war have provided additional evidence for the enduring negative consequences of the incarceration (Nagata, 1990, 1993).

Surprisingly little systematic research has investigated the long-term coping of Japanese Americans in response to their historical trauma, although interview studies conducted by Nagata and Takeshita (1998) and Kinoshita (2001) are informative. Both studies found that Nisei former internees recalled coping responses that incorporated Japanese cultural values. Because the Nisei were the children of immigrants, such values remained strongly influential

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in their lives. Specific cultural values that shaped their internment coping included *gaman* (persevering through hardships), *shikata ga nai* (a fatalistic attitude of "it cannot be helped"), *enryo* (self-restraint/reserve that discourages emotional expression), and the importance of intergenerational bonds (Homma-True, 1997). Kinoshita's (2001) interviews also found evidence for both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Emotion-focused strategies included distancing, self-control, positive coping, and seeking social support, whereas problem-focused strategies included altering their environment to increase privacy and comfort and establishing social activities to keep occupied.

Quantitative studies of internment coping are virtually absent although Kinoshita's (2001) interview study did include a version of Holmes and Rahe's (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Questionnaire (SRRQ), which was modified to assess Nisei perceptions of readjustment during and after their internment. In the Kinoshita study, Nisei rated their readjustment level for each item within a list of life events that included those related to the internment. Results indicated that "the relocation and internment experience received the second highest mean rating for readjustment and was only slightly below a major change in the health or behavior of a family member" (Kinoshita, 2001, p. 154). However, these findings were limited by the small sample size of 24 and the fact that some items were endorsed by as few as 15 participants. In addition, although social readjustment ratings are useful in suggesting the amount of adjustment that Nisei perceive they expended in response to their incarceration, they do not indicate the degree to which the Nisei perceived these efforts as reflective of successful coping.

A key issue today is the degree to which the internment continues to affect the lives of former internees. In the present study, we address this concern by (a) examining the self-ratings of internment coping by Nisei to assess how well they feel they have dealt with their past trauma and (b) identifying the psychosocial correlates of those ratings. It was hypothesized that, despite the passage of over half a century, the wartime incarceration continues to have an impact on reports of coping through two possible classes of internment variables: those that are distal in time and those that are proximal. The distal variables include conditions that existed during the internment; proximal internment variables include attitudes and behaviors in present-day life that can be linked to the incarceration experience.

Two specific distal variables of focus in this study were age when first interned and length of time interned. Past literature has noted that younger internees tended to experience less stress than those who were older (CRWIC, 1997). Therefore, it was hypothesized that age when first interned would be negatively related to self-reported coping. The impact of length of incarceration has not been empirically evaluated, although it was expected that longer internment created greater stressors. On the basis of this logic, length of incarceration was considered as a distal internment variable that would also be negatively associated with self-reported internment coping.

Internment variables that are proximal in time reflect current aspects of Nisei adjustment that are linked to the incarceration. These include ongoing negative emotions about the internment and negative reactions to talking about the experience. Negative internment emotions, seen as evidence of continued long-term stress, were hypothesized to be negatively related to reported coping levels. Similarly, given that difficulties in discussing the internment have been associated with greater depression among former internees (Hallenberg, 1988, as cited in Kinoshita, 2001), it was hypothesized that greater levels of negative internment communications and less communication about the internment experience with parents would each be related to lower levels of self-reported coping.

Two additional variables, the degree to which Nisei expressed an in-group attitudinal preference for Japanese Americans over European Americans[1] and the extent to which they actually affiliate with other Japanese Americans, were also included as proximal internment variables. As noted earlier, the incarceration experience led some Japanese Americans to minimize associations with their ethnic peers, whereas it led others to minimize associations with European Americans. Because it is unclear whether one stance would be associated with higher self-reported coping than the other, we did not form specific hypotheses regarding ethnic preference and socialization patterns and instead included these as exploratory variables that could suggest more subtle internment-related correlates.

The relationships between self-reports of internment coping and internment-related variables were a central focus for the present study. However, because these reports might also be affected by individual differences, two additional personality variables were included as potential mediators of coping self-reports: self-esteem and locus of control (LOC). Nisei who currently feel good about themselves may be inclined to frame both their past internment experiences and their current coping more positively than Nisei who report lower self-esteem. If this is the case, self-esteem would mediate the relationships between the internment-related correlates of interest and coping ratings. Aspects of self-reported coping may also be influenced by an individual's general beliefs about their life. Attributions about LOC are of particular interest because they have been found to be associated with posttrauma distress (Brown, Mulhern, & Joseph, 2002). An internal LOC is characterized by a belief that one has influence or control over events in their life, whereas an external LOC reflects the belief that life events are controlled primarily by others, by chance, or by fate. Given that an internal LOC has been associated with lower posttrauma distress, whereas an external LOC has been associated with higher posttrauma distress (Kahana, Harel, & Kahana, 1989), we explored possible mediation effects of LOC on the relationships between the internment-related variables and the self-reported coping levels.

This investigation differs from past coping research in several key ways. Whereas previous studies have measured the coping strategies of trauma victims, the present research asks former internees to provide self-assessments of their internment coping levels. This approach provides valuable information about how the Nisei place their past incarceration in relation to current function-

[1] The term *European American* is used in the introduction and discussion portions of this article in accordance with current terminology. It should be noted, however, that the term *Caucasian American* was used in the actual survey items to assess Japanese American attitudinal preference, as this was a term more familiar to the participant sample of this research. The latter term is used within the measures section to accurately reflect these items.

ing, information that is particularly relevant to understanding the long-term consequences of historical trauma. Previous studies have also typically considered coping as an overarching response process and do not assess specific domains of coping. This is problematic when studying historical traumas such as the internment, which involved stressors across multiple areas of Japanese Americans' lives. It is possible, for example, for a former internee to feel that they coped very well economically with their internment but less well emotionally. To understand more fully the complexities of postinternment coping, the present study gathered self-rating data for internment coping in three specific domains: economic coping, physical coping, and emotional coping.

In summary, the present study investigated psychosocial correlates of self-reported internment coping among Nisei former internees. Self-reports of coping were assessed in multiple domains of impact (economic, physical, emotional, and total) and in relation to (a) distal internment variables, (b) proximal internment variables, and (c) individual difference personality variables.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 520 (49% male, 51% female) second-generation Japanese Americans (Nisei) who were interned during World War II. The average participant age was 69.68 years (SD = 6.03, range = 50–99). Mean age at the time of internment was 15.97 years (SD = 5.43, range = 1–34), and average total time spent in incarceration was 17.62 months (SD = 11.01, range = 1–64). Average individual income ranged from $25,000 to $34,999 per year. Camp representation included: Gila River (13.3%), Heart Mountain (13.3%), Jerome (1.2%), Manzanar (8%), Minidoka (6.8%), Poston (11.1%), Rohwer (9.7%), Topaz (10.5%), Tule Lake (20.9%), and Crystal City (8%).

Measures

The survey used in this study was based on the existing literature on the intergenerational effects of trauma, themes generated from a focus group with former internees, questions from the Sansei Research Project (Nagata, 1993), and existing measures of self-esteem (SE; Rosenberg, 1965) and LOC (Levenson, 1973). The SE and LOC measures were subjected to principal components analysis with varimax rotation to ensure that the factor structure of these measures were relevant to the present sample. A cutoff of .50 was used to determine item inclusion for factor interpretation, and the results are reported below for each separate measure. The mean scores for the items on the obtained factors were used in subsequent analyses.

Coping. Three questions assessed how well participants felt they had coped with their internment experience economically, emotionally, and physically, using a scale ranging from 1 (*very poorly*) to 7 (*very well*). A total coping variable was also calculated on the basis of the mean score from the three individual coping variables. The Cronbach's alpha for total coping was .81.

Age when first interned. This variable reflected age (in years) at the time when the participant was first incarcerated in an assembly center, camp, or detention center.

Time interned. Time interned was the total number of months each participant spent under incarceration.

Income. Individual income was based on annual earnings using a scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 = <$10,000, 2 = $10,000–$14,999, and so forth, increasing in increments of $4,999, up to 10 = $50,000 or more.

Japanese American preference (JA preference). A measure of attitudinal preference for Japanese Americans (Nagata & Takeshita, 2002) included three questions regarding feelings of ease, trust, and service provision with Japanese Americans over Caucasian Americans (e.g., "I feel more at ease with Japanese Americans than Caucasian Americans," "All things being equal, I would prefer to go to a Japanese American for professional services over a Caucasian American"). These questions were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher preference scores reflected a greater preference for Japanese Americans (Cronbach's alpha = 0.60).

Japanese American affiliation (JA affiliation). JA affiliation, also based on Nagata and Takeshita (2002), included three behavioral indices: memberships in Japanese American organizations, readership of Japanese American newspapers, and extent of socialization with other Japanese Americans. Z scores calculated for each of the indices became the basis for this variable. A higher JA affiliation score indicated a higher level of behavioral association with the Japanese American community (Cronbach's alpha= 0.54).

Negative communication. Seven questions on negative internment communication were based on discussions from a focus group of former internees, literature on the Holocaust and internment, and Nagata's (1993) study on adult children of former internees. Using a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), participants rated questions such as "I have felt too ashamed to talk about it [internment]" and "When Caucasians talk about Pearl Harbor I feel uneasy." The seven items were summed to become the negative communication variable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83).

Negative emotions. Three questions assessing negative emotional reactions to the incarceration were based on literature that indicated potential for depression, bitterness, and hypervigilance among Holocaust and internment survivors (Chodoff, 1997; Nagata, 1993). Participants rated the degree to which they felt anger, (e.g., "I feel angry when I think about having been in a camp"), sad, and protective of their children (e.g., "My camp experience made me extra protective of my own children"), using a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The three items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.65 and were summed to form the negative emotions variable. Higher scores indicated greater levels of negative internment emotions.

Parent communication. Participants rated how often they had spoken with their parents about their internment experience, using a scale ranging from 0 to 4, on which 0 = *never*, 1 = *1 to 4 times*, increasing in increments of 4, up to 4 = *15 times or more*.

LOC. Levenson's (1973) original IPC multidimensional LOC scale comprised three scales: I = internal control (e.g., "My life is determined by my own actions"), P = powerful others control (e.g., "My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others"), and C = chance control (e.g., "When I get what I want, it's usually because I am lucky"). Each scale contained eight items, rated along 6 points. This study used a 7-point scale and omitted three original

items that contained content specific to psychiatric populations. Similar to Levenson's earlier findings, three factors were extracted for the present sample: Powerful Others (LOC Powerful Others), Internal (LOC Internal), and Chance/Fate (LOC Chance/Fate), accounting for 42% of the variance. Cronbach's alphas for the present sample were: LOC Internal = 0.71, LOC Powerful Others = 0.80, and LOC Chance/Fate = 0.71.

Self-esteem. Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem scale consists of 10 questions answered on a 4-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). Five items target positive self-evaluation (e.g., "I feel that I have a number of good qualities"), and 5 items target negative self-evaluation (e.g., "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure"). Principle components analysis for the present sample revealed two factors, Positive Self-Esteem (Positive SE) and Negative Self-Esteem (Negative SE), that were similar to those reported previously (Owens, 1994) and accounted for 54% of the variance. Cronbach's alphas were .79 for Positive SE and .75 for Negative SE.

Procedure

The present data are taken from a larger Nisei wartime internment project, which was designed to assess a broad range of postinternment perceptions among former internees shortly after the 50th anniversary of the camp closings. Participants were recruited using camp reunion lists from 8 of the 10 primary War Relocation Authority incarceration camps located in Arizona, Wyoming, California, Idaho, Arkansas, and Utah, as well as one Justice Department internment camp (Texas). Of the 1,700 surveys that were sent out, 588 (34.6%) were returned. Inclusion of only those who identified as being second-generation Japanese American and were incarcerated during the war reduced the sample size to 520.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table 1. Two sets of regression analyses were performed. The first set examined the relationships between participants' self-reports of long-term coping, the distal and proximal internment variables, and the personality variables of self-esteem and locus of control. The second set investigated whether self-esteem and LOC mediated the correlations between internment variables and coping reports. A multiple regression analysis was conducted for total coping, followed by separate regression analyses for each of the specific economic, physical, and emotional coping dimensions. For all regressions, groups of variables were entered stepwise in blocks. Demographic variables of age, gender, and income were entered in Step 1, followed by distal internment variables in Step 2 (age first interned and time interned), and proximal internment variables in Step 3 (parent talk, negative communications, negative emotions, JA preference, and JA affiliation). Step 4 added the personality variables (LOC factors and SE factors) into the regression. Gender was coded as a dichotomous variable (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*), and coding for income ranged from 1 to 10, corresponding to intervals of increasing income levels as described previously under *Measures*. Parent talk codes ranged from 1 to 4, corresponding to intervals of increasing communication. Regression results are presented in Table 2.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*M*	*SD*
Age	69.82	6.03
Income[a]		
Age first interned	15.97	5.43
Time interned (no. of months)	17.62	11.01
Parent talk[b]		
Negative internment communications	2.66	1.21
Negative emotions about internment	4.14	1.53
Japanese American preference	1.86	0.59
Japanese American affiliation (z score)	0.00	2.18
Positive self-esteem	3.35	0.41
Negative self-esteem	1.77	0.60
Locus of control: Powerful others	3.53	1.21
Locus of control: Chance/fate	3.19	1.04
Locus of control: Internal	5.73	0.86
Total coping	5.09	1.20
Economic coping	4.72	1.58
Physical coping	5.43	1.31
Emotional coping	5.14	1.35

[a] Income: <$10,000 = 9.1%; $10,000–$14,999 = 7.5%; $15,000–$19,999 = 8.0%; $20,000–$24,999 = 13.8%; $25,000–$29,999 = 10.5%; $30,000–$34,999 = 8.4%; $35,000–$39,999 = 9.6%; $40,000–$44,999 = 5.2%; $45,000–$49,999 = 4.7%; $50,000 or more = 23.2%. [b] Number of times talked with parents about internment (never = 12.2%, 1–4 times = 22.4%; 5–9 times = 15.1%; 10–14 times = 10.7%; 15 times or more = 39.6%).

Total coping. Income emerged as the only significant demographic variable associated with total coping in Step 1 ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$). Higher income was positively associated with higher total coping. The addition of the distal internment variables in Step 2 did not significantly increase the amount of variance accounted for beyond the demographics, although time interned had a significant negative association with total coping ($\beta = -.11, p < .05$) and income maintained a significant positive association ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$). The addition of the proximal internment variables in Step 3 significantly increased the total coping variance accounted for ($\Delta R^2 = .09, p < .001$) and indicated that time interned was no longer significant, whereas income, negative communication, and JA preference were each significant. Higher income ($\beta = .21, p < .001$), lower negative communications ($\beta = -.20, p < .001$), and lower preference for other Japanese Americans ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$) were associated with higher total coping.

Inclusion of the personality variables in Step 4 significantly increased the variance accounted for in total coping ($\Delta R^2 = .09$, $p < .001$). Within this model, positive SE ($\beta = .24, p < .001$) and LOC powerful others ($\beta = .17, p < .01$) were positively associated with total coping ratings, whereas LOC fate/chance ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .01$) was negatively associated. Income ($\beta = .15, p < .01$), negative communication ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$), and JA preference ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$) remained significant, indicating that the addition of the personality variables did not override their associations with total coping. The final regression equation, which included all variables, accounted for 25% of the total coping variance.

Analyses were then conducted to examine whether the personality variables or income mediated the significant correlations

Table 2
Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Internment Coping

Variable	Total coping (n = 496) β	Increment R^2	Δ F	p	Economic coping (n = 497) β	Increment R^2	Δ F	p	Physical coping (n = 503) β	Increment R^2	Δ F	p	Emotional coping (n = 505) β	Increment R^2	Δ F	p
Step 1																
Age	−.01	.06	6.68	.000	−.04	.07	7.90	.000	.01	.03	2.77	.05	.01	.03	3.42	.05
Gender	.10				.09				.08				.08			
Income	.26***				.27***				.17**				.19**			
Step 2																
Age	.01	.01	1.98	*ns*	.05	.02	4.39	.05	.05	.00	0.35	*ns*	−.07	.01	1.35	*ns*
Gender	.10				.09				.08				.09			
Income	.27***				.28***				.17**				.20***			
Age first interned	−.05				−.15				−.50				.08			
Time interned	−.11*				−.15**				.50				−.08			
Step 3																
Age	.08	.09	6.81	.000	.09	.04	3.12	.01	.11	.08	5.54	.000	.00	.11	8.29	.000
Gender	.07				.05				.05				.06			
Income	.21***				.25***				.11				.15*			
Age first interned	−.11				−.19				−.92				.18			
Time interned	−.09				−.14*				−.42				−.05			
Parent talk[a]	.04				.06				.04				.00			
Negative internment communications	−.20***				−.08				−.20***				−.23***			
Negative internment emotions	−.07				.02				−.09				−.11			
Japanese American preference	−.14*				−.17**				−.06				−.11*			
Japanese American affiliation	.04				.07				.02				.01			
Step 4																
Age	.08	.09	7.31	.000	.08	.06	4.98	.000	.07	.09	6.80	.000	−.03	.06	4.67	.000
Gender	.07				.06				.06				.05			
Income	.15*				.19***				.07				.10			
Age first interned	−.02				−.12				−.01				.09			
Time interned	−.07				−.12*				−.01				−.04			
Parent talk[a]	.03				.06				.03				.00			
Negative internment communications	−.14*				−.06				−.15*				−.17**			
Negative internment emotions	−.10				.01				−.12*				−.13*			
Japanese American preference	−.13*				−.16**				−.06				−.11*			
Japanese American affiliation	.06				.08				.04				.02			
Positive self-esteem	.24***				.24***				.19**				.18**			
Negative self-esteem	.03				.08				.02				−.02			
Locus of control: Powerful others	.17**				.13*				.18**				.11			
Locus of control: Chance/fate	−.21**				−.19**				−.21**				−.14*			
Locus of control: Internal	.03				−.08				.11				.04			

[a] Number of times talked with parents about internment.
* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

found for negative communication and JA attitude in relation to total coping. Following the steps for testing a mediational hypothesis (Baron & Kenny, 1986), a series of additional regressions were performed. The results indicated that positive SE (Sobel = −3.33, $p < .001$), LOC chance/fate (Sobel = −3.23, $p < .001$), and income (Sobel = −2.04, $p < .05$) each significantly mediated the relationship between negative communication and total coping. Negative communication continued to be a significant predictor in each of these analyses (for positive *SE*, β = −.24, $p < .001$; for LOC chance/fate, β = −.21, $p < .001$; and for income, β = −.27, $p < .001$, respectively), indicating partial rather than full mediation effects. A partial mediation effect of LOC chance/fate (Sobel = −2.66, $p < .01$) on JA preference (β = −.17, $p < .001$) was also found.

Economic coping. When demographics were entered in Step 1 for economic coping, income emerged as the sole significant predictor ($\beta = .27, p < .001$). Higher income was associated with higher economic coping ratings. The addition of distal internment variables in Step 2 added significantly to the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .05$). Income remained a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .28, p < .001$), and time interned emerged as a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.15, p < .01$). In Step 3, proximal internment variables were added, resulting in a significant R^2 change ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p < .01$). Income ($\beta = .25, p < .001$) and time interned ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$) were again significant, whereas JA preference emerged as an additional negative correlate of economic coping ratings ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$). For Step 4, the addition of personality variables led to another significant in change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .06, p < .001$). Income, time interned, JA preference remained significant. In addition, positive SE ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), LOC powerful others ($\beta = .13, p < .05$), and LOC chance/fate ($\beta = -.19, p < .01$) emerged as significant correlates. Higher economic coping ratings were associated with higher income, shorter length of internment, less preference for Japanese Americans, greater positive self-esteem, greater attribution of control to powerful others, and less attribution of control to chance and fate. The final regression equation accounted for 20% of the variance in economic coping ratings. Mediation analyses revealed that income significantly reduced the association between time interned and economic coping (Sobel = 2.18, $p < .05$). Time interned ($\beta = -.12, p < .05$) remained significant even after the inclusion of income, indicating that income was a partial mediator.

Physical coping. When demographics were entered in Step 1 for physical coping, income emerged as the sole significant predictor ($\beta = .17, p < .01$). Higher income was associated with higher physical coping ratings. The distal internment variables in Step 2 did not add significantly to the prediction. In Step 3, the inclusion of proximal internment variables resulted in a significant R^2 change ($\Delta R^2 = .08, p < .001$). Income was no longer significant, and negative communication was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.20, p = .001$). The addition of the personality variables in Step 4 significantly increased the variance accounted for in physical coping ratings ($\Delta R^2 = .09, p < .001$). In this final regression model, negative communication ($\beta = -.15, p = .05$) remained significant. In addition, negative emotions ($\beta = -.12, p < .05$), positive SE ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), LOC powerful others ($\beta = .18, p < .01$), and LOC chance/fate ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$), were significant correlates of physical coping ratings. Higher self-ratings of physical coping were associated with lower levels of negative internment communications and emotions, higher attributions of control to powerful others, lower attributions of control to chance/fate, and higher positive self-esteem. The final equation accounted for 19% of the variance in physical coping.

Positive SE (Sobel = −3.14, $p < .01$) was found to partially mediate the association between negative communication and physical coping, with negative communication retaining significance when positive SE was included in the regression ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$). A significant partial mediation was also found for LOC chance/fate (Sobel = −2.95, $p < .005$) in relation to the association between negative communication ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$) and physical coping. In addition, LOC chance/fate (Sobel = −3.11, $p < .01$) significantly mediated the relationship between negative emotions ($\beta = -.15, p < .005$) and physical coping.

Emotional coping. Income emerged as the sole significant predictor ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) of emotional coping in Step 1. Higher income was associated with higher ratings of emotional coping. The distal internment variables in Step 2 did not add significantly to the prediction, although income remained a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .20, p = .001$). In Step 3, the inclusion of proximal internment variables resulted in a significant R^2 change ($\Delta R^2 = .11, p < .001$). Higher income ($\beta = .15, p < .05$), lower negative communication ($\beta = -.23, p < .001$) and JA preference ($\beta = -.11, p = .05$) were significant predictors. The addition of the personality variables in Step 4 significantly increased the variance accounted for in emotional coping ratings ($\Delta R^2 = .06, p < .001$). In this final regression model, the negative communication ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$) remained significant. In addition, negative emotions ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$), JA preference ($\beta = -.11, p = .05$), LOC chance/fate ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$), and positive SE ($\beta = .18, p < .01$) were significant correlates. Higher self-ratings of emotional coping were associated with lower levels of negative internment communications and emotions, lower JA preference, lower attributions of control to chance/fate, and higher positive self-esteem. The final equation accounted for 21% of the emotional coping variance. In addition, positive SE was found to partially mediate the relationship between negative communication ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$) and emotional coping (Sobel = −3.08, $p < .005$). Similarly, LOC chance/fate partially mediated the relationship between negative communication ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$) and emotional coping (Sobel = −2.73, $p < .01$).

Discussion

This investigation examined the psychosocial correlates associated with the self-reported long-term coping of Nisei Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in World War II American concentration camps. The study hypothesized that present self-reports of internment coping would be related to both distal and proximal internment variables. Results partially supported the hypotheses. Distal internment variables (age when first interned and length of internment) were not significantly associated with Nisei reports of coping. However, proximal internment variables related to ongoing negative internment communications and emotions and an in-group ethnic preference were significantly associated with self-reported coping. These latter results support the hypothesis that the incarceration continues to shape the experiences of Nisei today.

The general absence of relationships between distal internment characteristics and present coping reports was unexpected. Previous literature indicated that younger internees experienced less internment trauma than older internees and suggested that Nisei who were interned at a younger age would report higher internment coping (CWRIC, 1997). The decades-long gap between the internment experience and self-reports of coping gathered for this study may help account for the absence of this relationship. Those who were older during internment had the opportunity to respond to their greater challenges over time and may therefore report present coping levels that are more similar to those of younger Nisei. In addition, individuals often evaluate their past more positively in late life (Staudinger, Marsiske, & Baltes, 1993), and older Nisei may have adjusted their assessments of the internment experience. The lengthy passage of time could also have reduced

the impact of incarceration length on coping reports. It is possible that the amount of time in incarceration did not lead to greater trauma and poorer coping. Instead, the nature of specific events encountered by internees during their confinement may affect trauma intensity and reported coping rather than the length of time interned.

Although distal variables were clearly important in shaping internee experiences, they did not emerge as significant correlates of present coping ratings. Instead, proximal internment variables, particularly ongoing negative internment communications and emotions, demonstrated significant associations with ratings of internment coping. Nisei who currently reported more negative internment-related communications with others and negative emotions around their incarceration also tended to report lower physical and emotional internment coping as well as, in the case of negative communications, total internment coping. These findings are sobering in that they reflect a lingering sense of internment-related tension in the lives of former internees more than 50 years after incarceration. Despite outward appearances of adjustment, it is clear that some Nisei continue to carry a psychological burden from their past. The correlation between the negative emotions and negative communications variables ($r = .45$) suggests that, although there is overlap between the two, they also tap somewhat different long-term effects of this historical trauma. It is possible to consider these two effects as differing in relation to personal versus social domains. For example, although negative emotions may exist for the Nisei privately when they reflect on their own past incarceration, negative communications involve a more public uneasiness around the experience. The fact that negative communications were most associated with lower coping ratings suggests that it is important to consider the ways in which trauma effects interact with the posttrauma social environment. In the case of former internees who have continued to live in the same country that betrayed them, discussions and references concerning the internment that occur in mainstream social interactions may trigger feelings of vulnerability.

Contrary to expectations, more frequent communications with parents about the internment were not associated with higher reported coping. This finding may have been affected by cultural factors that restricted the frequency of communications. For example, the Japanese attitude of *shikata ga nai* ("it cannot be helped") reduced the likelihood that Nisei would dwell on their wartime experiences. Nisei may also have limited such conversations out of respect for the patriarchal family structure and *enryo*, which requires that one avoid burdening others. In addition, although the Nisei could converse with their parents in Japanese, language differences often impeded meaningful communication between these generations (Fugita & O'Brien, 1991), and this also reduced the likelihood that the Nisei would talk with their parents about the internment.

A greater attitudinal preference for Japanese Americans over European Americans, included as a proximal internment variable, was associated with lower total, economic, and emotional coping reports. It is not surprising that former internees would express a psychological preference for other Japanese Americans. Withdrawal into one's own ethnic group often occurs when racism is encountered. Additionally, in-group interactions and ethnic identification can become more pronounced in older adulthood as individuals find comfort and connection with their ethnic community. The link between in-group preference and lower reported coping, however, is less obvious. The preference may indicate lingering feelings of distrust or vulnerability which are then reflected in lower coping scores. However, it is also interesting to consider the flip side of this finding, that reports of higher coping were associated with a lower preference for Japanese Americans. This association may indicate a resilient ability to move on from the past and maintain openness to European Americans. If, however, higher coping reports are related to former internees' psychologically distancing themselves from their own ethnic group, this would suggest a troublesome long-term effect of the internment. It would be important to investigate in-depth how former internees view their preferences for Japanese Americans over European Americans to better understand the present results.

It is interesting to note that Japanese American behavioral affiliation did not predict coping levels. The difference between attitudinal preference and behavioral affiliation could be due to the fact that the behavioral questions may have been affected by external factors in ways that the preference questions were not. For example, Japanese American affiliation questions in this study inquired about the memberships in Japanese American groups, frequency of readership of Japanese American newspapers, and current ethnic group socialization patterns. These behaviors can be affected by accessibility and community demographics, whereas the attitudinal preference questions reflected personal preferences without regard to real-world conditions. Another possibility is that Japanese American attitudinal preference and behavioral affiliation are two distinct indicators of postinternment adjustment and coping perceptions are only associated with an internal, psychological preference for other Japanese Americans but not with a more externally visible socialization pattern.

Personality and demographic measures were included in the study to explore the possible mediating effects of these proximal variables on the relationships between internment variables and self-reported coping levels. Results indicated that current income level, positive self-esteem, and external LOC each demonstrated direct and partial mediation effects on domain-specific and total coping scores. Lower income was associated with reports of poorer economic and total coping, a logical finding as income is so closely tied with how individuals perceive their economic standing. Income also partially mediated the relationships between negative internment communications and reported levels of total and emotional coping, although it did not override the impact of the significant internment-related variables.

Positive self-esteem was directly associated with higher self-reports of coping levels across all coping domains. Previous research has found that good mental health and adaptive coping are associated with positive self-esteem (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988). Our results suggest that this relationship may hold for long-term adjustment as well as for more immediate coping. Positive self-esteem also partially mediated the correlations between coping reports and negative internment communications, indicating that the degree to which Nisei view themselves positively today did affect these associations.

Contrary to previous research indicating that positive coping is associated with an internal LOC, higher self-reported coping was not associated with internal attributions of control. Instead, the present data indicated that reports of higher postinternment coping were related to a greater external attribution of control to powerful

others. This attribution of control to powerful others may reflect an adaptive ability to see power relations for what they are. The internment confirmed that powerful others could indeed control their lives, and those Nisei who recognize this reality may experience better coping. Attributing control to powerful others may also relate to more positive coping reports because it is culturally consonant. Japanese culture is based on vertical collectivism, which values dutiful behavior and a strong sense of hierarchy (Triandis, 1995). In this context, ascribing control to powerful others would represent a positive and adaptive cultural position.

The data also showed that, although an external attribution of control to powerful others was positively associated with coping reports, an external attribution of control to chance/fate was associated with lower self-reported coping in all domains. This finding parallels previous studies showing that an external sense of control is related to poorer coping (Strickland, 1978). It is interesting to consider that the Japanese attitude of *shikata ga nai* (it cannot be helped) mentioned earlier is one of the most common responses reported by internees in relation to their incarceration (Nagata & Takeshita, 1998). This stance, which is similar to a chance/fate LOC, was adaptive and realistic when coping with the trauma when it occurred. However, in light of the present results, it may be that Nisei who maintained this fatalism long after the war have had greater difficulty coming to terms with their internment and, therefore, have experienced poorer coping. This possibility suggests the need to consider how culturally based responses vary in their efficacy over time when studying the long-term consequences of historical trauma. Chance/fate LOC also partially mediated the relationships between self-reported coping and the significant internment-related variables, emphasizing further the usefulness of including this variable when assessing long-term coping.

Although the data suggest the value of considering the role of the self-esteem, LOC, and income in shaping coping reports, it is important to bear in mind that these individual difference variables exerted only partial mediation effects on the relationships between self-reported internment coping and the internment variables related to communication, emotions, and in-group preference. In all cases, correlations between the proximal internment variables and self-reported coping remained significant, even after controlling for mediation effects.

A novel aspect of this research was the assessment of internment within specific coping domains. Results suggest the utility in such an approach. Emotional coping was associated with three of the proximal internment variables (negative communication, negative emotion, and JA preference), whereas economic coping was significantly associated with only one (JA Preference). At the same time, economic coping was associated with income and the length of time an individual had been interned, an association that did not occur for reports of physical or emotional coping. By considering these more refined domains of coping, researchers can develop more nuanced hypotheses about the processes under study. The current results, for example, suggest that the effects of the internment are the most likely to influence reports of emotional coping.

Limitations

There are limitations to consider when interpreting the results of this study. First, it is important to recognize that some former internees, particularly men, suffered an early death after the war (Jensen, 1997; Nagata, 1993). Individuals who lived long enough to participate in this research represent a select group of those who have been most resilient. In addition, the participants were drawn from internment camp reunion lists that included Nisei who chose to actively maintain ties with other Japanese American internees. Individuals who did not or could not attend camp reunions, as well as former internees who were physically unable to complete the surveys, were excluded. Generalization of results is also limited by the uneven representation of the individual camps. Particularly noteworthy is the overrepresentation of participants from Tule Lake, as that camp was designated as a special facility to include internees who were labeled disloyal by the government. Disloyalty was based on answering "no" to mandated questions that asked internees about their willingness to forswear allegiance to Japan and to declare their allegiance and willingness to fight for the United States. Those who were sent to Tule Lake as "no-no's" endured unique internment stressors during their segregation, and many also encountered postwar prejudice from other Japanese Americans who disagreed with their wartime stance. These circumstances may have led to lower coping reports among the Tule Lake Nisei, although an examination of ratings across camps suggested that Tule Lake participants did not differ significantly from other camp participants on the assessed coping domains.

Another limitation is that measures for several of the variables, including the coping scales themselves, were developed specifically for the present study. Because it was important to create new measures that could directly address internment-related coping, psychometric data for these scales are not established. The single-item scales used to assess economic, emotional, and physical coping could not be assessed for reliability, and results from these scales should be interpreted with this in mind. In addition, it is important to remember that total coping scores were a composite of the three single-item coping scales and therefore do not represent a variable that is independent of those scales. Our approach of analyzing both the total and specific domains of coping was driven by a goal of distinguishing between this kind of event-specific coping and more generalized measures of coping. By examining the psychosocial correlates of total, economic, physical, and emotional internment coping reports separately, we were able to develop a broader picture of the Niseis' long-term reactions. Given that this study represents an initial attempt to examine internment-specific coping, these univariate analyses were considered most appropriate in achieving our research objective and in reporting the results conservatively. Future research with larger item sets would be required to identify latent variable structures related to the event-specific coping measures. Finally, when interpreting present results, one should be mindful that the previously established self-esteem and LOC measures in the study do not have normative data for second-generation Japanese Americans.

Because the participants in this study rated their present-day coping in relation to events that occurred over 50 years ago, the data are complicated by their retrospective nature. Specific internment challenges, reactions to these challenges, and individual interpretations of the term *coping* also varied across the Nisei. Perceived coping reflects a complex interaction between environmental, physical, and psychological factors and the long-term effects of trauma are best understood in a life-span developmental context (Maercker, 1999). Geographic area of residence, living in high- versus low-density Japanese American areas, intervening life

events, and health concerns represent some of the many variables that may have shaped postwar attitudes of ethnic preference, self-esteem, attributions of life control, and internment coping. Without greater details regarding the life context of the Nisei who participated in this study, our understanding of their coping reports is limited.

Implications for Research and Practice

The present findings support the value of investigating the long-term effects of historical trauma using self-reported coping across multiple life domains and illustrates the importance of using a research design that includes both trauma-related and general personality measures. Such an approach recognizes that long-term coping evaluations may be influenced by contemporary individual differences in personality characteristics as well as by continuing reactions to situations or feelings that are linked to the past trauma. The fact that external attributions of control to powerful others rather than internal attributions of control were associated with higher reports of internment coping supports the need to consider the possibility that the interrelationships between LOC and coping may vary across cultural subgroups. It is also instructive that, although the vast majority of Nisei former internees have led successful lives, a sizable proportion of participants in the study reported mid- to low internment coping. This is even more noteworthy, given the fact that over 50 years have passed. Practitioners should bear in mind that external indices of "successful coping" are not sufficient for determining how well an individual perceives their own level of coping with an historical trauma. It is critical to evaluate the individual's own assessment of their coping process as well as how they place this "coping" within their broader life circumstances.

Researchers and practitioners alike should also be aware that the ongoing flow of history can affect coping perceptions. The receipt of an official apology and issuance of $20,000 redress to surviving internees in the early 1990s had a powerful positive impact on individuals, as well as the entire Japanese American community. Because the current data were collected between 1995–1996 and after redress, self-reports of coping may have been higher than if the data had been collected earlier. More recently, the events of September 11th reraised the topic of the wartime internment as news reporters drew parallels between the 2001 terrorist attacks and the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Panicked calls to round up "suspicious" and "potentially disloyal" Arab and Muslim Americans were painfully reminiscent of anti-Japanese sentiments that fueled the incarceration of Japanese Americans. These developments triggered memories for many Japanese Americans and may have challenged their sense of having successfully coped with their past internment. Keeping this in mind, responses to historical traumas must also be assessed over time and within the context of ongoing political and social developments.

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