

学位論文の要旨 (論文の内容の要旨)
Summary of the Dissertation (Summary of Dissertation Contents)

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学 位 論 文

Dissertation

論 文 題 目

Dissertation Title

“We’ll never be one of them”: The Impacts of Acculturation Strategies on a Sense of Self-continuity among Highly Skilled Thai Workers in Japan

While the aging population issue in Japan has become pressing, the country has increasingly relied on economic migrant workers to fill in the shortage in working-age populations (Takehide, n.d.). Even though migrant workers have played a significant role in the Japanese economy, the ethnocentric and assimilative migration policy resulted in an exclusionary attitude toward foreign workers. A number of scholars pointed out the likelihood of foreigners experiencing hardship, especially in the professional domain (Froese, 2010; Kim, 2011; Holbrow & Nagayoshi, 2016; Aichinger et al., 2017). Amidst the studies regarding migrant workers in Japan, a trend of discussion of low-skilled workers prevailed, leaving the situations of highly-skilled migrant workers understudied (Redding & Schott, 2003; Orbeta, 2013). In this regard, the exploration of the acculturation studies can address the gaps in the previous literature, as it will shed light on the coping mechanism and the identity negotiation process. The impact of acculturation on the continuity of migrants’ cultural identity is interesting but underexplored. In this sense, acculturation has become relevant to the concept of self-continuity, which refers to the sense of sameness in identity over time. The focus on the correlation between acculturation and self-continuity can open up a new research avenue, as it takes a sociocultural approach to understand the situation. Among economic migrant workers in Japan, Thai workers represent an intriguing research subject for two reasons. First, previous scholars only explored the situation of illegal and low-skill Thai migrant workers in Japan. Second, Thai and Japanese cultures bear both similarities and disparity. Therefore, the dynamics of acculturation and self-continuity due to shared and contradictory culture values are worth exploring.

As for the acculturation, this research applied Berry's (2019) acculturation strategies model which has been widely accepted among migration and identity scholars (Sullivan et al., 2007; Schwartz et al., 2010; Burnett-Zeigler et al., 2013; Choy et al., 2021). According to Berry, an acculturating individual may opt for four different approaches of acculturation, namely assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Each approach concerns the degree to which an individual affiliates with the host and home culture. Assimilation refers to the situation when an individual neglects their home culture and adapts themselves to the host culture. In contrast, separation is applied when an individual mostly interacts with people from the same cultures and rejects the host cultures. Integration is a strategy for those who manage to accept both host and home culture equally. According to the previous research, integration was considered the most advantageous strategy when it comes to the identity negotiation process. On the contrary, marginalization is the least healthy and most problematic way of acculturation because it implies the situation when an individual does not affiliate themselves with any culture. As acculturation deals largely with identity negotiation, it resonates with self-continuity. As the concept originates from the sociopsychological field, none of the previous scholars explored the sense of self-continuity through cultural identity. Relying on this conceptualization, this research identifies the prevailing acculturation strategies of highly skilled Thai workers in Japan and explores its impact on the sense of self-continuity.

In terms of methodology, this research applied autobiographical meaning-making as a method to investigate the sense of self-continuity. The effectiveness of this approach is evident from previous self-continuity studies (Habermas & Köber, 2015; Camia & Zafar, 2021). Autobiographical meaning-making is basically a means of narrative construction that illustrates the extent to which an individual can make meaning of their past events and identities, especially in terms of their contribution to their present identities. Life-line

drawing is also adopted in this research as a visual representation and guideline of the narratives (Park, 2019). Even though the narratives from the autobiographical meaning-making directly illuminate self-continuity, the life stories of Thai migrants are also expected to encompass their migration experience and trajectory, which shed light on acculturation. In this sense, acculturation in this study is specific to the orientation into host and home cultures. The multiethnic Identity Measure or MEIM survey (Phinney, 2010) was also modified and applied to investigate the sense of cultural belonging through numeric data. The participants in this research are 18 male and female highly skilled Thai migrant workers who have worked in Hiroshima city for at least one year. Other sociodemographic attributes include age, marital status, and Japanese proficiency.

Drawing from the interviews with the participants, this research suggested three major findings. First, integration prevails as the most preferable and advantageous acculturation strategy. Despite similarity in the acculturation approach, the patterns of integration varied and can be classified into three paradigms; assimilation to integration, strategic switch between assimilation and integration, and consistent integration. Second, the participants can safeguard their self-continuity due largely to integrative approach of acculturation. It is evident that the engagement in Thai community and personalization of Japanese identity for self-development nurture the sense of self-continuity. Finally, Thai workers can smoothly acculturate and gain social acceptance on the condition that they follow Japanese social norms and values. The last finding illustrates that Japan is still on its way to transforming itself into a multicultural society. Especially in the work domain, migrant workers are expected to follow and personalize Japanese identity for the sake of acculturation, which indicates that the discourse of cultural diversity has not yet been appreciated.

This research entails some limitations. To begin with, the number of 18 participants is considered too small to generalize the findings. Moreover, all the participants bear similarities in their sociodemographic characteristics. In addition, the lack of voices from Japanese people may indicate bias in the study. The expansion of participants number with more diverse backgrounds, as well as the narratives from the interview with Japanese people can address the research gaps. Based on the major findings, however, this study makes three major contributions. First, this study exemplifies the application of an interdisciplinary approach to explore identity concepts through social contact theory. This approach to study differs from the prevailing trend in self-continuity studies. Therefore, future studies can apply a similar approach, which will extend scholarly discussion. Next, this study can provoke thoughts and broaden the perspectives among the scholarly community about the changeability and fluidity of Thai cultural identities. Finally, Japan has recently expressed its intention to make the society more multicultural, especially through the implementation of a multicultural coexistence policy at the prefecture level. To support this initiative, the findings from this research feature insights and voices from migrant workers, which will be helpful for decision-makers to design and implement policies in the workplace that foster respect for cultural diversity.

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備考 論文の要旨はA 4判用紙を使用し、4,000字以内とする。ただし、英文の場合は1,500語以内とする。

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