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Title: "Paving Pathways in Japan: Exploring the Intergenerational Legacy of Zainichi Fatherhood"

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Abstract

Immigrant fathers living in Japan have not been given much attention in Japanese family scholarship. In this study, the author examines how Zainichi fathers negotiate between Japanese and Korean legacies and cultural expectations regarding fatherhood. Relying on a symbolic interactionist perspective and a life course perspective, and through qualitative research involving in-depth interviews with sixteen Zainichi fathers and community leaders this study focuses on their perceptions of fatherhood in Japan, and the intergenerational ambivalence that adult sons experience with their aging fathers. Interviews with Zainichi Korean fathers living in urban centers in Japan suggest that men recall a generation fathers influenced by their “situational adjustment” and racialized history that prompted them to have a mix of both fear, admiration, and empathy for their aging fathers. With regard to their own fathering the salience and importance of men’s fathering identity was universal across 2nd and 3rd generation Zainichi fathers. Zainichi fathers face daily pressures to be a breadwinner and their provision role is central. They largely absorb the contemporary nurturing and caring approach new father ideal. Education is highly valued and a strategy for imagining beyond the Korean/Japan ethnonational binary. Importantly, men’s racialized history as Zainichi Koreans, pervades their experiences as both a man and father and as a son. Intergenerational relationship analysis further points to several life course discursive strategies that permit men to balance negative judgments with positive ones of their aging adult fathers: 1) sharing the life stage as worker and father with their parent; 2) appreciating historically-situated differences living in Japan and the parenting imperatives sharing their lives, and; 3) drawing on filial norms to take responsibility for their own role in intergenerational conflicts. In addressing how these men perceive their intergenerational ambivalence, the paper moves beyond prior research to extend the concept to father-son dyads, the Asian immigrant context, and the neglected racialized history shaping the culture and conduct of men’s fatherhood living in Japan.