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EMPLOYEE PHYSICAL FITNESS AND HEALTH PROMOTION
PROGRAMS IN THE JAPANESE
MANAGED COMPANY

By

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B.S., University of Minnesota

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
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1985

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G.L.O.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Two of the more prominent influences upon the American society during the 1980's have been the success of the Japanese in business and the increased awareness in the benefits of regular physical exercise. Hardly a day passes when one does not encounter these two topics in the headlines. Quality control circles and aerobics have become a part of the American lexicon while Sony VCRs are as popular a consumer item today as exercise bicycles and rowing machines.

Clearly the Japanese and physical fitness have penetrated the western consciousness. Moreover, there is a relationship between these two seemingly unrelated topics that is of potential interest. In a 1983 address to the Health Insurance Association of America on the role of physical fitness in the workplace, President Reagan said: "We are all aware of the fitness programs in Japanese companies" (Freudenheim, 1984). Indeed, the popular press has frequently published photographs of Japanese workers, lined up row upon row, performing calisthenics. To some, this image has fostered an association of physical fitness with the high productivity capabilities of the Japanese workforce. At the same time, research on Japanese management has depicted these companies as family-like structures where the corporation appears to be exceedingly interested in the health and welfare of their employees (Lee and Schwendiman, 1982).

The question that can be raised from these observations is: are these calisthenics an indication that physical fitness and related health promotion activities are endorsed by Japanese management? It is recognized that the human factor has become a vital aspect of increased

productivity. Consequently, the Japanese and other industrialized nations stand to gain a great deal from incorporating fitness and health promotion into their operations. In Japan, technology and mechanization may lead to a reduced opportunity for physical activity. This in turn can lead to a decrease in physical function and an increase in ailments such as hypertension and heart disease. The Japanese are already paying a heavy price for this technological development as indicated by a 10 nation survey which found them to be suffering from the highest stress levels of industrialized nations (New firm helps execs handle stress, 1984).

Despite the image the west has of the Japanese performing calisthenics at work, the role of physical fitness and health promotion in the company in Japan is an enigma. Further, little is known about the availability and function of these programs in Japanese companies located in the United States where American workers are employed. It is the proposition of this paper that the human orientation of Japanese management will provide extensive fitness and health promotion measures to safeguard employee health, and that American-based production sites will be reflections of the parent company in Japan by offering similar benefits.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural orientation of and extent to which physical fitness and health promotion programs are provided by the Japanese company both in the United States and Japan. Additionally, this study attempted to determine if discrepancies

in these services exist between American production sites and those in Japan. Further, an informal outcome would be the comparison between the Japanese and American orientation to fitness and health promotion in the workplace.

Methods and Limitations

A review of the literature on fitness and health promotion in the Japanese company using 3 - online data bases yielded little information on the topic. Also, 62 Japanese companies with United States production sites were surveyed concerning the availability of fitness and health promotion programs here and abroad (Appendix A and B). Companies were randomly selected for this survey from the Directory of Foreign Business in the United States and the Standard and Poors Index. A follow-up letter was mailed to increase the chance of questionnaires being returned. Of the 62 questionnaires mailed, 9 were considered undeliverable and 12 were returned completed. This produced a 22% (12 of 51) rate of return. This poor return may be attributed to the general reluctance of the Japanese to divulge company information to outsiders (DeMente, 1981). Although such a low rate of return may be considered undesirable, it is deemed adequate considering the exploratory nature of the study. Also, descriptively reported individual responses can be as valuable as group data in a study like this. Any conclusions or generalizations from these results should be treated as preliminary and speculative.

II. A CULTURAL ORIENTATION TO EMPLOYEE BENEFITS IN THE JAPANESE COMPANY

Today in the world of business, we hear a great deal about the importance of a company's culture and its impact on an organization's management practices (Peters and Waterman, 1982). Nowhere is this influence more apparent than in Japan where culture permeates the lifeblood of the company and society. At the cornerstone of a Japanese company's culture rests the harmonious relationship between management and labor (Vogel, 1979). In Japan, management recognized that its workforce is its most vital natural resource. It is often said that the Japanese company with good relations between management and labor will succeed and the employee will ultimately determine profitability. Consequently, in an effort to maintain relations, the management of Japanese companies pays extremely close attention to the social, spiritual, physical - and to a lesser degree - economic needs of their employees.

The Japanese refer to management's attitude toward labor with the word onjō shugi, which translates to "warm heartedness". Onjō shugi stems from a paternalistic system where Japanese management acknowledges the needs of its workforce far beyond that which is usually expected of a company. Large corporations in Japan will often provide workers with twice as many benefits as the law requires of them (Vogel, 1979). In fact, many companies will attempt to infiltrate every facet of their employees' lives with a myriad of guidance and service. For example, a substantial portion of an employee's leisure or recreation needs will be fulfilled by the company under the heading of voluntary social costs

(Furstenberg, 1974). Employees may swim in the company pool or play tennis on the company-owned courts. They may dine or have a drink at the company club or get a trim at the company-operated barbershop. During weekends or holidays, employees can retreat to the company lodge. In fact, employees of larger Japanese firms can have surgery performed at the company hospital (30% of all large Japanese companies operate their own hospital) (Yakabe, 1974). Most all of this comes at no direct cost to the worker.

Rationale for Employee Benefits in the Japanese Company

In general, it appears that the Japanese corporation expends more resources in nonpayroll areas than other industrialized nations (Pascale, 1978). They appear to do so for several reasons. To begin, it is the expectation of the Japanese government that the company be responsible for the welfare of its employees (Taylor, 1983). Since business opposes a tax-heavy welfare state, it accepts the responsibility to assume a large portion of the costs and services of the nation's health and welfare system.

The availability of extensive benefits (this paper regards fitness and health promotion programs as benefits) like Nissan's \$40 million dollar sport and recreation system are often provided in lieu of higher salaries, especially to lower ranking employees. Rather than pay higher wages, companies offer benefits which in turn are used to reward hard-working employees (Sethi, Namiki and Swanson, 1984). Since the Japanese seldom use contractual agreements with employees and unions, management is able to use considerable discretion in offering benefits

for industrious employees to work even harder. Benefits like elaborate fitness and sport facilities instill a sense of security in workers since they know that if they continue to perform, many of their needs and interests will be fulfilled by the company. This in turn reinforces the employee's company loyalty.

Loyalty to the firm is also generated by the concept that the more successful a company is in providing benefits, the larger the portion of its employees' total life space is engulfed by the organization (Marsh and Mannari, 1976). As a result, competing loyalties that may distract can be reduced. This action is also justified by the awareness that the greater the interaction between the employee's personal affairs and company activities, the greater the achievement of individual as well as company goals (Whitehull and Takezawa, 1968). As a result, Pascale (1978) feels the loyalty of the Japanese and positive work attitude they feel toward the company is to some extent bought by management with supportive benefits. Nonetheless, it has been found that the majority of the Japanese prefer a paternalistic management system (Marsh and Mannari, 1976).

Historical Tracings and Paternalism Limitations

Japanese business has not always been so benevolent to their employees. Only since World War II has onjō shugi become synonymous with Japanese management. The true root of paternalism dates to labor relations in Japan's more traditional agricultural areas where the company provided workers with nutritious diets and living quarters, as well as moral and intellectual guidance (Taylor, 1983).

The paternalistic nature of business today, especially with the so-called "nonessentials" such as fitness facilities and health promotion programs, appear to have been tremendously influenced by the recent economic growth in Japan. Until recently, health-related problems were handled defensively by Japanese companies who preferred to just "get by" the nation's labor health laws (Yamamoto, 1983). Their principle concern at best was with occupational injuries as opposed to lifestyle-related disease and disability.

Employee benefits are not universally extended to all workers in Japan. For example, despite the much-talked about security for employees under the infamous lifetime employment in Japan, relatively few workers qualify. It is estimated that only 35% to 40% of the total workforce in Japan and 40% to 60% of larger trading and manufacturing firms are offered this benefit (Sethi et al.). Lifetime employment is almost exclusively awarded to college-educated males, while women are almost never granted this benefit. Japan is the only country among advanced nations where the wage gap between male and female industrial workers widened in the decade ending in 1983 (Lohr, 1984). These disparities are not rectified by unions since in Japan they do not protect workers in the same way they do in the United States.

The Japanese Employee

Recently, management has obtained considerable notariety and is often given credit for the success of the Japanese in business. However, an enterprise's true success in Japan may be better credited to the work ethic and dedication to task for which the Japanese worker is

renowned (Taylor, 1983). Their diligence and loyalty have helped them achieve status among the most highly productive workers in the industrialized world.

There is little evidence to suggest that the high rates of productivity in Japan can be attributed to a healthier, more fit labor force. Honda of America employees have less absenteeism than their parent firm in Japan (Quality is top priority at U.S. plants, 1984). When Japanese workers in 5 major electronics firms were compared to their American counterparts, it was found that the Japanese were not absent from work significantly less nor did they appear to work harder (Weiss, 1984), just longer. The Japanese Ministry of Labor estimated that in 1978, the average Japanese outworked the average American by 212 hours or 27 eight-hour days (Taylor, 1983). Every day at the Toyota Assembly factory in Japan, workers are not sure when they will leave the job since overtime is compulsory, often averaging several hours a day (Report on the "Japanese miracle" working conditions of the Toyota factory, 1981). At the same time, Japanese workers do not take time off even when offered as indicated by the fact that Japanese white-collar workers take only 57% of their paid vacation (Sethi et al., 1984).

The Japanese pay a heavy price for their feverish work ethic. The Ministry of Labor found that 66% of the factory workers surveyed complained of mental fatigue while 42% objected to the physical strain of their jobs (Yakabe, 1974). One out of every 25 wage earners in Japan is treated annually at a mental hospital or clinic for stress (Time, 1983). At Toyota, 30 employees take their life annually (Report on the "Japanese miracle", working conditions at the Toyota factory, 1981).

Even more staggering is the fact that the average life expectancy of a Toyota worker in Japan is 63 whereas the national average is 72.

Physical Fitness and Health Promotion in the Japanese Company

Several years ago after a Japan Airline DC 8 that was operated by a mentally disturbed pilot crashed into the Bay of Tokyo, the company established an employee health maintenance program. Other Japanese companies as well have recently ushered in the advent of physical fitness and health promotion in the workplace. It appears that the development of these programs in Japan coincide with the rise in popularity of employee programs in the United States.

In the United States, participation in employee fitness and sport programs is frequently done as a means of self improvement e.g., to lose weight, improve endurance, etc. This individualism is often said to be looked down upon by the group-oriented Japanese as being self-centered. Instead, the Japanese have traditionally placed a priority on mastering their "inner self" as opposed to their "outer muscle"; hence their association with the martial arts. These cultural beliefs may help explain why team sports and recreation programs appear to have initially been more important to the Japanese company than physical training programs. These team or social sports and activities have been well suited to the group conscious Japanese where participation by the work group in nonwork activities is highly valued.

Even participation in sport is a relatively new phenomenon in the Japanese workplace. Until their contact with the west, the Japanese did not have a word for sport (Taylor, 1983). While martial arts are

associated with Japan, these activities are more a means of training the "inner self" than for fitness or recreation. The only sport that appears to have its origin in Japan is Sumo wrestling. Even today, the Japanese are more inclined to be spectators than participants in sport.

Further evidence of the limited orientation to physical activity by the Japanese is the general lack of facilities for sport and fitness available to the public. Since there is crowding and limited open space in Japan's metropolitan areas (parkland, playing fields, etc., for sport and physical training) the Japanese are therefore very facility-dependent to engage in these activities. Outside the workplace, these facilities are extremely scarce (Shigeo and Hatano, 1982).

Health Promotion

Just as sport and recreation preceded the incorporation of physical fitness training in the Japanese company, health promotion activities appear to be a recent occurrence as well. Also, while evidence suggests that industrial and occupational health education has also been a part of the Japanese workplace for sometime, lifestyle related health education and prevention have more recently been introduced. In 1977, the Health Promotion Foundation was established in Japan to work with business in the development of a comprehensive health education plan for labor (Yamamoto, 1983). In 1981, the Health Promotion Foundation integrated with the Trim Association to include physical fitness as a preventative health strategy in the workplace.

Other illustrations of the relative newness of health promotion in Japanese companies are to be found in recent articles in the Japan

Economic Journal. This publication has recently reported a story announcing the start-up of a business venture which will assist Japanese executives to cope with stress (New firm helps execs handle stress, 1984). Still another article cited several companies in Japan that were experimenting with smoking cessation programs and using cash incentives to encourage employees to quit (Increased number of businesses move to ban smoking in offices, 1985). Compared with the west in 1985, these stories would not likely be considered late-breaking news.

The Workplace Calisthenic: Fact or Fiction

Despite a common perception that on-the-job exercise produced Samuri warrior-like employees in Japan, the reality is much less dramatic. For example, the workplace calisthenic in Japan has long been associated with a commitment to physical fitness. In many companies, work begins with 10 minutes of calisthenics that may be performed while singing the company song. In other factories, the afternoon coffee break consists of more calisthenics. Auto workers in Japan may spend 10 to 15 minutes of their 40-minute lunch hour eating, then form small groups to play team games such as pairs ping-pong or volleyball for the duration of their break. While calisthenics and games such as these are common in Japanese companies, it should be noted that physical activity is not synonymous with physical training. Research indicates that significant cardiorespiratory gains can be made in exercise programs of 5 to 10 minutes (the common duration of these calisthenics) (Hollmann, Rost, Liesen, Dufaux, Heck and Mader, 1981). However, it is doubtful that the intensity of these exercises and games is sufficient to produce

a training effect on persons of average fitness. Moreover, the same limitation exists in the use of these calisthenics in treating psychological disorders. Bouts of light exercise (10 to 17 minutes of brisk walking at a HR of 100 to 144 beats-per-minute) produced no effect on the treatment of depression (Morgan, Roberts and Feinerman, 1971) and (Sime, 1977). It therefore appears that these calisthenics are better suited as warm up exercises than for producing a training effect. This observation was confirmed by Japanese companies contacted in this study. The majority of those responding (85%) felt the calisthenics served to "refresh" workers or to build teamwork. At the Kyocera Company, it was reported that by doing one thing together each day (calisthenics), company unity is reinforced while employees have fun at the same time (Peters and Waterman, 1982).

Fitness and Health Promotion in the Japanese Company Today

Today, despite that lack of a long-standing cultural orientation to fitness, sport and health promotion in the workplace, Japanese business seems to now be embracing the idea in a big way. At present, 95% of all large firms (5000 or more employees) and 46% of all small firms (30-99 employees) offer sport and fitness facilities and programs to their employees (Yakabe, 1974). Many larger firms share facilities with smaller suppliers and trading partners. Today, 80% of the sport and fitness facilities in all of Japan are now company owned and operated (Patrick, 1976). This same kind of involvement is currently displayed with health promotion where 96% of all large and 52% of all small companies offer preventive measures (Yakabe, 1974).

While many Japanese fitness and health promotion programs in the workplace resemble those in operation in the United States, others have evolved with a unique Japanese flavor. For example, the Minolta Camera Company provides meditation rooms where workers can relax while at the same time try to solve a production problem (Orchestrated efforts worked out for company-wide fitness programs, 1984). Japan Airlines offers its employees cultural courses in the arts, horticulture and cooking which are aimed at helping workers relax while improving communication between various job classifications. Honda of Japan provides natural (dirt) trails where workers can unwind while riding an off-road motorcycle (Sakiya, 1982). At Nippon Yusen Karska (NYK), Japan's largest shipping company, the latest computer technology is used to monitor physiological function in order to measure job readiness for sailors. Still other programs and facilities house the new exercise training equipment and employ a host of medical personnel and fitness technicians (Osaka Gas employs a staff of 26 to run its program (Osaka Gas pursues fitness with vigor, 1984).

Company Rationale for Providing Fitness and Health Promotion Opportunities

In much of the industrialized world, employee health has traditionally been viewed as an uncontrollable cost of doing business. However, unchecked medical expenditures and lost time due to infirmity and inefficiency can spell the difference between profit and loss in today's competitive trade markets. As Japan's economic surge begins to taper, a response to profitability may begin to overshadow some of management's traditional business orientation. Citing the need for

reducing employee smoking habits, Dr. Shoshichi Kawamo of Japan's Vaivala Hospital said: "The bad effects of smoking efficiency are becoming better understood among managers" (Increased number of businesses move to ban smoking in offices, 1985). It appears that this productivity factor will play an increasingly strong role in determining the availability of Japanese employee health promotion and fitness programs.

Other factors seem to necessitate the use of employee programs as well. In Japan, there is a very low average annual employee turnover rate (7% vs an estimated 25% in the U.S.) (Marsh and Mannari, 1971). Even if an employee does not receive the security of lifetime employment, job mobility between companies is rare (Reishauer, 1977). Since many Japanese workers will stay with a company until retirement, it is in the firm's best interest to provide preventative health measures for its workers when they are young and healthy. In this way, the possibility exists for improved employee health as workers grow older and become prone to ailments associated with the aging process and lifestyle related disease. This may help keep medical costs, which the company is responsible for, at a minimum.

Another possible explanation for the elaborate fitness and health promotion programs seen in Japan today is related to the way companies are financed. Many Japanese enterprises depend on loans from banks for capital as opposed to the sale of securities. Therefore, there are less shareholders to pressure companies to show quarterly and yearly profits. In Japan, firms concentrate on long-term measures that will help lenders view the enterprise as a good risk. A stable, healthy and productive

workforce in Japan can be a company's best assurance of being a good investment. This long-term perspective also enables firms to construct and operate expensive facilities and programs knowing a return on their investment will be realized in the future.

Finally, employees themselves are becoming cognizant of health and fitness in Japan and may begin to request more programs and facilities of this type. A recent survey (Health consciousness: now and in the future, 1983) found that the Japanese are now indicating a desire to improve their health through self-efforts such as exercise and nutrition. Still another study (Shigeo et al.) points to this increased interest where it was found that 60% of the Japanese above the age of 20 now participate in sport and fitness-related activities. In 1961, only 14% of the population participated.

Employee Participation in Company Programs

Employees in many Japanese organizations will often participate in fitness and health promotion programs knowing the benefits of their action is within the work groups, and ultimately the company's best interest. Therefore, adherence to these programs may be extremely high without the use of supplemental incentives that are frequently used in American programs. According to a National Poll on Sport conducted by the Prime Minister's Office (1976), 71% of employees who have access to sport and fitness facilities in their workplace participate. In many companies like Osaka Gas, participation is mandatory. Osaka employees are expected to use the company facilities for one hour per day. This exercise period is provided to workers in addition to their regular meal

break (it should be noted that in many Japanese firms, the work day often extends well into the night, especially for male employees).

Where exercise is not mandatory, Marsh and Mannari (1976) found that company facilities are principally used by unmarried male workers who are aspiring for promotion. This can be attributed to the knowledge that participation in company-sponsored programs and the use of facilities in Japanese companies is an indication of an employee's integration into the firm. By making use of these services, an employee expresses his appreciation to the firm for making these facilities and benefits available. This arrangement contrasts with many western companies where fitness facilities and health promotion programs are offered, but may not be used since the employee may feel no moral obligation to utilize what has been provided.

Still another explanation for the use of programs and facilities in Japan is given at Sumitomo Metal where employees' chances for promotion within the firm are dependent upon their physical condition. This stipulation may help motivate employees further to take advantage of company-sponsored facilities and programs.

This chapter has attempted to provide the reader with a generalized description of the role of fitness and health promotion in the Japanese company. The next chapter will then focus on the specific findings of this survey in an effort to integrate the Japanese perspective on fitness and health promotion to their American bases of operation.

III. FITNESS AND HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE AMERICAN OPERATIONS OF JAPANESE COMPANIES

"Americans are big, so they should be able to work twice as much as the Japanese"

Soichiro Honda
Founder and Supreme Advisor
Honda Motor (The Oriental
Economist, Sept., 1983)

To be competitive, Japanese companies have set up operations throughout the world. Sanyo for instance, employs 30,000 people outside of Japan (Tsuchida, 1982). Since the mid-1950's, the Japanese have developed United States based production sites where American workers are employed. As of 1973, the Japanese had invested \$152 million in the United States which has grown to \$4.2 billion by 1980 (Sethi et al.).

Doing business in the United States has meant that for some enterprises, traditional Japanese business practices would have to be amended to accommodate a nonhomogeneous and individually oriented American labor force. Companies like Honda realized that while some of the elements of its homebase management practices could be retained, not all employee programs that have been incorporated in Japan can be applied with equal success in the United States (Sakiya, 1982). The reluctance of some companies to extend the full Japanese benefit system overseas is attributed to their belief that the paternalistic orientation is culturally unique and therefore may not be workable in the west. Sony of America dropped a Japanese style calisthenic program when it became apparent that employees did not wish to participate.

Further, while Sony's parent firm in Japan offers extensive sport facilities and health promotion programs to its workers, its San Diego factory provides no benefits of this type to its 1,500 employees.

Survey Results

Of the Japanese companies responding to this study, 63% are engaged in some type of manufacturing where blue-collar workers are predominately employed. This figure would appear to influence the likelihood of a company sponsoring an employee fitness program. This is because blue-collar workers, in general, have not been known to regularly participate in physical training. Studies indicate that those individuals most likely to exercise tend to be younger, more highly educated, more affluent and employed as professional or white-collar workers (Harris and Associates, 1979) (Government of Canada, 1978). Despite these findings, it appears that Japanese companies are making a commitment to encourage production workers as well as management to exercise. This is especially true of large manufacturing operations. Fifty percent of the firms responding indicated that they provide some means of physical exercise for their employees within the context of the company. For a randomly selected collection of businesses, this figure seems to be higher than what might be expected to be found in a similar sample of American-owned companies. It is worth noting that there is a large range between the extent to which companies provide fitness opportunities. Facilities provided by companies range from a changing room and shower to multimillion dollar fitness centers.

The availability of company-sponsored fitness programs appears to

be related to company size. The two largest organizations contacted in this study also provided the most extensive facility and programming efforts. Many of the smaller companies provided no programs of this type (the majority of Japanese companies in the United States employ less than 100 people) (Sethi et al.). However, company size alone does not appear to predict these services as indicated by Sony and Sharp (4,000 employees) who do not provide workers with physical fitness programs. Unlike Japan, where smaller companies share facilities with their larger trading partners, there is no indication of this type of cooperation in the United States. This can best be attributed to the way companies are dispersed in the United States and to their relative self-sufficiency.

Honda and Nissan: Examples of Company Fitness

Two companies that best resemble Japanese Paternalism by offering extensive employee benefits are Honda of America and Nissan. Both companies are in the process of developing what can be considered some of the most extensive fitness programming efforts in business today. By producing in the United States, Honda and Nissan avoid paying large tariffs on their products. Monies made available from this savings and production efficiency are returned to workers in the form of benefits like Olympic-size swimming pools and other state-of-the-art facilities. Workers at Honda of America receive benefits equalling 35% to 40% of their regular wages (Quality is top priority of U.S. plants of Japanese automobile manufacturers, 1984).

Employees at these companies are very carefully screened to ensure

the right mix of shared values. One such shared value that is sought by Honda and Nissan and other Japanese companies as well is a strong work ethic. As a result, 66% of the companies in this survey, including Honda and Nissan, opened their production sites in rural America where the work ethic appears to be strongest. It may be that these companies who offer fitness programs to blue-collar workers will find a correlation between a "work ethic" and a commitment to physical training.

Honda and Nissan encourage production workers to use company facilities by integrating the health or wellness concept into the organization's management philosophy. For example, the concept of wellness resembles the Japanese quality control circle which is based on preventing - not detecting defects (Schonberger, 1982). In this way, fitness and health promotion is consistent with the rest of the company's values.

Another important ingredient that helps firms like Honda and Nissan incorporate physical fitness into the workplace is to do so only when employees are ready for it. Instead of building their fitness facilities along with the rest of the factory, these companies have waited several years after production had already begun before they developed their programs. This allowed for workers to first gain trust in the organization and become familiar with company values. This process orientation is very indicative of the Japanese management style.

Many American companies that provide fitness programs use incentives such as cash, additional free time, etc. to encourage employees to initiate or adhere to preventative health measures. None

of the Japanese companies contacted for this study use incentives to encourage participation. Instead, companies like Nissan rely on changing values through education and behavior modification. The use of facilities is considered of secondary importance.

Health Promotion

It appears that smaller Japanese firms in the United States find the more cost effective health promotion measures to be better suited to their needs. This correlates with the findings that large enterprises in Japan spend more on health facilities and programs while small firms pay more attention to preventative health and hygiene (Yakabe, 1974). Of the companies responding, 58% said they provide health promotion programs to their employees. Again, this figure seems higher than what might be expected from a sample of American businesses.

By far, the most popular health promotion measure is the physical exam which is offered by 58% of the companies responding. In Japan, only 37% of all large companies provide employees with medical exams on a regular basis. In some of the American-based companies in this study, exams were offered to all employees while others were for management only. This division between management and all employees in physical exams is the only program cited that distinguishes between the two job classifications. This is considered unusual since the sharing of all facilities and programs between management and labor is a common characteristic of the Japanese management system. The company president of Honda will use the same locker room facilities as production workers, for example. A speculative explanation for this division may be

attributed to the high costs of these tests, especially as it concerns smaller operations.

While facilities and programs are commonly shared between management and labor, employee family members are generally not welcome to participate. Only 25% of the companies offering fitness and health promotion facilities and programs in this study extend invitations to employee family members. Only in the largest firms is there an indication that family members of employees are welcome to use company facilities and programs. In these cases, companies are located in rural areas and the worksite has become a focal point for nonwork activities for employees as well. Employees, or associates as they are called at Honda and production technicians at Nissan, may bring family members to the worksite on weekends to swim in the company pool or take part in organized recreation activities. This use pattern is very similar to what is often found in Japan where company programs and facilities are frequently utilized by employee family members or retirees, especially on weekends or nonpeak hours. In fact, 30% of the company facilities in Japan are open to the general public as well.

Program Initiation

A common feature of Japanese management is a bottom-up communication system where employee input is highly valued. Also, many decisions in the Japanese organization are made by consensus. However, when it comes to determining what fitness facilities and health promotion programs will be provided, 90% of the firms in this survey said these benefits are initiated at the request of management. Only at

Honda of America is there evidence of strong employee input to program development. Honda uses an employee advisory board to help determine what programs and facilities are most desirable for the associates. As a result, Honda offers a unique variety of employee services which range from women's body building to a company-sponsored water ski club.

Program Expansion and Costs

Since many of the Japanese companies in the United States have recently established operations here, the process orientation would suggest that these firms may develop facilities and programs in the near future. However, of those companies responding to this question, the majority indicated that they had no plans for expansion, citing financial limitations as the reason.

Although capital appears to be tight for these programs, especially in smaller Japanese firms operating in the United States, 90% of the companies that provide some type of fitness and health promotion programs do so at no direct cost to the employee. This figure favorably compares with policy in Japan. Only one company in this study provided programs on a cost sharing basis.

Attempts to further interpret survey results were considered of limited value. Some questions were left unanswered while other responses were inconsistent; therefore, of questionable validity.

Comparative Data Table on Major Company Fitness
and Health Promotion Program Variables.

	<u>Japan*</u>	<u>Japan/American**</u>	<u>American***</u>
<u>Program Participation</u>	Often Mandatory	Voluntary	Voluntary
<u>Gender Use</u>	Primarily used by males	Coed	Coed
<u>Competing Facilities Outside the Company</u>	Few outside the company	Located in rural areas, some facilities outside the company	Many facilities and programs outside the company
<u>Program Popularity</u>	Health promotion programs more popular than physical fitness	Health promotion programs more popular than physical fitness	Health promotion programs more popular than physical fitness
<u>Incentives</u>	Individual incentives are seldom used to encourage participation	Individual incentives are seldom used to encourage participation	Individual incentives often used to encourage participation
<u>Family Use of Facilities</u>	Facilities generally open to employee family members, retirees, and in some cases the general public	Primarily for employees only, however, some larger firms are open to family members on weekends	Primarily for employees only
<u>The Influence of Company Size on Programming Efforts</u>	The availability of facilities and programs is related to company size, larger firms provide the most	The availability of facilities and programs is related to company size, larger firms provide the most	The availability of facilities and programs is related to company size, larger firms provide the most
<u>Program Cost</u>	Provided at no cost to employees	In general, programs provided at no employee cost	Some cost sharing

* Based on the review of available literature.

** Based on the results of this survey.

*** Based on (O-Donnell and Ainsworth, 1984).

IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural orientation of and extent to which physical fitness and health promotion programs are provided by the Japanese company both in the United States and Japan. Additionally, this study attempted to determine if discrepancies in these services exist between American production sites and those in Japan. Further, an informal outcome would be the comparison between the Japanese and American orientation to fitness and health promotion in the workplace.

The presence of extensive benefits such as fitness and health promotion programs in the Japanese company stems from its paternalistic management style. While employee fitness programs in the United States are primarily intended for the improvement of physiological function, company programs in Japan have traditionally placed a special emphasis on improving human relations and as a means to refresh or warm-up workers. An increased pressure for improved productivity may be the current underlying reason why fitness and health promotion is pursued so vigorously by the Japanese company today. The development of these programs coincides with the rise in popularity of employee programs in the United States.

The paternalistic nature of Japanese management alone does not appear to predict the availability of employee fitness and health promotion programs in the United States. It does seem however, that programs in these Japanese companies based on the United States exceeds those services provided by American companies. The size of the Japanese

company in the United States appears to be an indicator as to whether or not programs might be offered. Cost effective health promotion programs are more popular than physical fitness programs, especially to smaller firms. Physical exams are the most frequently offered benefit of this type. Many of these Japanese companies have incorporated the wellness concept into existing values and procedures.

Recommendations

In the attempt to examine the nature of physical fitness and health promotion in Japanese business, this study has raised more questions than it is capable of providing answers. These questions illustrate that there is substantial room for further cross-cultural examination of this subject. The recognition of this need may be one of this heuristic investigation's most valuable contributions.

Since it has become evident that previous western research on this subject is limited, on-site visitation to Japan (or Japanese companies in America) is desirable for the collection of first-hand information. This may help reduce the previously mentioned disclosure concerns of the Japanese when asked to correspond by mail. On-site visitation would also serve as an important reliability check to validate company services. These same advantages of facility visitation would apply to the study of Japanese companies with American operations as well.

Possible areas for continued investigation may include the study of adherence to physical fitness and health promotion practices by the Japanese worker. As the labor force in Japan becomes more self-focused, traditional influences on participation such as company loyalty may

diminish. Adherence to these services is also of interest concerning the traditionally non-exercising blue-collar workers in America who are being invited to participate in company-sponsored physical training programs by Japanese management. Further, research might also be directed to determine if there is a possible correlation between the work ethic associated with these blue-collar workers and a willingness to exercise in the Japanese company.

Associated with these further studies of adherence to company programs is the investigation of the means of how Japanese management integrates these services into the work schedule e.g., through flex-time, extended breaks, after-hours use, etc. This inquiry could signal the commitment behind management's decision in the Japanese company to provide extensive employee fitness and health promotion services. This may be true in light of how production and time oriented the Japanese appear to be.

As business, culture and technology continues to mesh between Japan and the west, epidemiological studies that compare the health and fitness of American workers with the Japanese may also be of interest. This type of investigation would lay the groundwork for a comparative study of programming efforts and related services in the workplace between the two countries based on actual, as opposed to perceived, health needs.

Another possible area of study on this subject might include exploring the availability of fitness and health promotion programs for women in the Japanese company. This may be of special interest as it appears women are slowly becoming better recognized as professionals in

Japan. Many of them are staying in the labor force longer by returning to work after they have raised a family. The implications of this trend are many as it pertains to employee health.

All new employees in the Japanese company go through extensive orientation and training sessions to familiarize workers with company philosophies, goals and objectives. During this time, employees are often made aware of the company's position pertaining to fitness and health. It may be of interest to evaluate the techniques that these organizations use to inspire workers to take part in company-sponsored fitness and health programs.

Finally, additional cross-cultured studies concerning fitness and health promotion in the workplace should be conducted between other industrialized countries as well. To date, there has been limited research in this area.

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APPENDIX A
COVER LETTER

January 17, 1985

Dear Personnel Manager:

The enclosed questionnaire is being distributed to Japanese companies operating in the United States in an attempt to identify what these organizations are doing here and in Japan relative to employee health and fitness. Since little is known in the United States about how the management of Japanese firms are responding to this topic, your participation to this study is vital. If you are not the most appropriate person in your organization to respond to this questionnaire on employee health promotion programs, please forward this to the individual who is.

For the purpose of this study, health promotion programs are defined as company sponsored opportunities for employees to learn about - and pursue - a healthier lifestyle. Specifically included under this heading of health promotion are programs for: employee fitness, health education and recreation.

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire by February 1, 1985 and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope. Your response will contribute considerably to the understanding of employee health promotion programs in Japanese operated businesses. I will be happy to share the results of this study with you. Please include your name and address in the space provided at the end of the survey if you are interested in a copy of the results. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gordon L. Opel
Department of Health and Physical Education
Univeristy of Montana
Missoula, Montana 59812

APPENDIX B

Please mark (X) the answer(s) that best represents your company.

1. What is your company's name and primary business?

Company Name _____

- Communication
 Finance/Insurance/Real Estate
 Manufacturing
 Services
 Transportation
 Other (please identify) _____

2. Please indicate which of the following health promotion programs and facilities, if any, your company provides for its employees. Identify if these programs and facilities are available to management only or all employees. Also, please indicate the same for your parent enterprise in Japan.

United States Operation

Japan Operation

<u>United States Operation</u>			<u>Japan Operation</u>	
Management Only	All Employees		Management Only	All Employees
___	___	nutrition education	___	___
___	___	cancer prevention	___	___
___	___	stress management	___	___
___	___	smoking cessation	___	___
___	___	cardiovascular health education	___	___
___	___	alcohol abuse treatment	___	___
___	___	drug abuse treatment	___	___
___	___	weight loss	___	___
___	___	CPR training	___	___
___	___	health risk appraisal	___	___
___	___	physical exams	___	___
___	___	hypertension screening	___	___
___	___	recreation programs	___	___
___	___	aerobic dance classes	___	___
___	___	locker rooms	___	___
___	___	weight training equipment	___	___
___	___	racquet courts	___	___
___	___	tennis courts	___	___
___	___	swimming pool	___	___
___	___	jogging track	___	___
___	___	meditation or quiet rooms	___	___
___	___	other (please explain)___	___	___
___	___	_____	___	___

APPENDIX B, CON'T.

3. Are the programs and facilities listed in question #2 in general available to employee dependents and retirees?

United States Operation ___ Yes ___ No

Japan Operation ___ Yes ___ No

4. Who determines what programs and facilities will be offered to employees e.g., management, an employee health promotion committee, etc.?

United States Operation _____

Japan Operation _____

5. In general, which of the following best describes how your employee health promotion programs are financed?

<u>United States</u> <u>Operation</u>	<u>Japan</u> <u>Operation</u>	
___	___	employee pays all costs for each program he/she participates in
___	___	on a cost sharing basis between company and employee if so, what percent is paid by company ___ employee ___
___	___	company pays all costs
___	___	other (please explain) _____

6. What, if any, incentives does your company use to encourage employees to stay healthy and fit e.g., insurance rebates, time off to exercise, etc.?

United States Operation

Japan Operation

APPENDIX B, CON'T.

7. What methods does your organization use to evaluate the effectiveness of health promotion activities and how would you describe your level of effectiveness at this time?
8. Listed below are a number of health problems workers often face. In column #1, please rank the top 3 problems that you feel employees in your organization in the United States face (rank 1 as the most common, 3 as the third most common). In column #2, please do the same for your employees in Japan using the same scale.

<u>Column #1</u>		<u>Column #2</u>
United States		Japan
___	cancer	___
___	obesity	___
___	heart disease	___
___	low back problems	___
___	motor vehicle accidents	___
___	poor physical fitness	___
___	stroke	___
___	diabetes	___
___	stress/hypertension	___
___	drug abuse	___
___	alcohol abuse	___
___	suicide	___
___	emphysema	___

9. It is said that successful Japanese companies do very selective hiring of new employees. In your opinion, would a prospective employee's health be considered as part of the hiring criteria by Japanese companies? (Please explain your answer.)

APPENDIX B, CON'T.

10. Americans often see pictures of Japanese workers doing calisthenics together in the workplace. In your opinion, what purpose(s) do these exercises serve?

11. What future plans does your company have to implement additional health promotion programs and facilities?

For a copy of the results of this survey, please indicate your name and address in the space below. Thank you again for your assistance.

APPENDIX B₁
QUESTIONNAIRE SCORES

Please mark (X) the answer(s) that best represents your company.

1. What is your company's name and primary business?

Company Name _____

- 1 Communication
1 Finance/Insurance/Real Estate
8 Manufacturing
 _____ Services
 _____ Transportation
2 Other (please identify) _____

2. Please indicate which of the following health promotion programs and facilities, if any, your company provides for its employees. Identify if these programs and facilities are available to management only or all employees. Also, please indicate the same for your parent enterprise in Japan.

United States Operation

Japan Operation

<u>United States Operation</u>			<u>Japan Operation</u>	
Management Only	All Employees		Management Only	All Employees
_____	<u>4</u>	nutrition education	_____	<u>1</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	cancer prevention	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	stress management	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	smoking cessation	_____	<u>1</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	cardiovascular health education	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
_____	<u>5</u>	alcohol abuse treatment	_____	<u>1</u>
_____	<u>5</u>	drug abuse treatment	_____	<u>1</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	weight loss	_____	_____
<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	CPR training	_____	_____
_____	<u>3</u>	health risk appraisal	_____	_____
<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	physical exams	_____	<u>4</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	hypertension screening	_____	<u>1</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	recreation programs	_____	<u>3</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	aerobic dance classes	_____	_____
_____	<u>4</u>	locker rooms	_____	<u>1</u>
_____	<u>2</u>	weight training equipment	_____	_____
_____	<u>1</u>	racquet courts	_____	<u>1</u>
_____	<u>1</u>	tennis courts	_____	<u>2</u>
_____	<u>2</u>	swimming pool	_____	<u>1</u>
_____	<u>2</u>	jogging track	_____	<u>1</u>
_____	_____	meditation or quiet rooms	_____	<u>1</u>
_____	_____	other (please explain) _____	_____	_____

APPENDIX B₁, CON'T.

3. Are the programs and facilities listed in question #2 in general available to employee dependents and retirees?

United States Operation 1 Yes 7 No

Japan Operation 3 Yes 1 No

4. Who determines what programs and facilities will be offered to employees e.g., management, an employee health promotion committee, etc.?

United States Operation Management - 8 Employees - 2

Japan Operation Management - 5

5. In general, which of the following best describes how your employee health promotion programs are financed?

United States Japan
 Operation Operation

 employee pays all costs for each program
he/she participates in

 1 1 on a cost sharing basis between company
and employee
if so, what percent is paid by company
employee

 5 3 company pays all costs

 1 1 other (please explain)

6. What, if any, incentives does your company use to encourage employees to stay healthy and fit e.g., insurance rebates, time off to exercise, etc.?

United States Operation LIMITED RESPONSE - NO PATTERN

Japan Operation

APPENDIX B₁, CON'T.

7. What methods does your organization use to evaluate the effectiveness of health promotion activities and how would you describe your level of effectiveness at this time?

No evaluative methods were used by 8 companies responding to this question.

8. Listed below are a number of health problems workers often face. In column #1, please rank the top 3 problems that you feel employees in your organization in the United States face (rank 1 as the most common, 3 as the third most common). In column #2, please do the same for your employees in Japan using the same scale.

Listed below are mean scores and number of cases reported. Limited responses mitigate major use of this data.

<u>Column #1</u>		<u>Column #2</u>	
United States		Japan	
1 case	<u>2</u>	cancer	<u>2</u> 2 cases
3 cases	<u>1.6</u>	obesity	<u>1</u> 1 case
4 cases	<u>2.5</u>	heart disease	<u>2</u> 4 cases
2 cases	<u>2</u>	low back problems	—
2 cases	<u>2</u>	motor vehicle accidents	—
	—	poor physical fitness	<u>1</u> 1 case
	—	stroke	—
	—	diabetes	<u>3</u> 1 case
4 cases	<u>2</u>	stress/hypertension	<u>2.3</u> 3 cases
1 case	<u>2</u>	drug abuse	—
1 case	<u>3</u>	alcohol abuse	—
	—	suicide	—
	—	emphysema	—

9. It is said that successful Japanese companies do very selective hiring of new employees. In your opinion, would a prospective employee's health be considered as part of the hiring criteria by Japanese companies? (Please explain your answer.)

Yes, it is a factor

No, it is not a factor

2

6

APPENDIX B₁, CON'T.

10. Americans often see pictures of Japanese workers doing calisthenics together in the workplace. In your opinion, what purpose(s) do these exercises serve?

Mental and physical relaxation Improve morale Exercise

5

3

2

11. What future plans does your company have to implement additional health promotion programs and facilities?

None of the companies responding indicated plans for program expansion.