

The Family Journal

<http://tfj.sagepub.com>

Helping a Japanese Immigrant Family Cope With Acculturation Issues: A Case Study

Atsuko Seto and Mark S. Woodford

The Family Journal 2007; 15; 167

DOI: 10.1177/10664807062979587

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://tfj.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/15/2/167>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors](#)

Additional services and information for *The Family Journal* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://tfj.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://tfj.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations (this article cites 10 articles hosted on the
SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
<http://tfj.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/15/2/167>

Helping a Japanese Immigrant Family Cope With Acculturation Issues: A Case Study

Atsuko Seto

Mark S. Woodford

The College of New Jersey

A growing population of Asian immigrants to the United States amplifies the need for helping professionals to gain knowledge regarding the adjustment processes among these groups. Unless counselors who are trained in Western systems models are able to modify their approaches to work with non-Western families, the therapy process may not be enlightening to these families. One Asian ethnic group, the Japanese, has a long history of immigration and a strong multigenerational presence in the United States. To contribute to the literature addressing clinical work with a specific Asian immigrant group, a case study is presented as an example of how culturally sensitive assessment and treatment can be provided to a Japanese immigrant family.

Keywords: Asian immigrants; acculturation; multiculturalism; case study; Japanese immigrant family

A growing population of Asian immigrants to the United States amplifies the need for helping professionals to gain knowledge regarding the adjustment processes of this group. Despite the continuing population increase, studies pertaining to Asian immigrants and their cultural adjustments remain sparse (Yeh, 2003). Although some similarities can be observed among Asian ethnic groups, cultural diversity within this population is significant (Sue, 1998). It is also crucial for family counselors to realize that the counseling interventions and treatments used for mainstream American families may not necessarily be effective with Asian families (Chang & Yeh, 1999). Unless counselors who are trained in Western systems models are able to modify their approaches to work with non-Western families, the therapy process may not be enlightening for these families.

To demonstrate culturally sensitive clinical work appropriate to specific Asian immigrant groups, this article provides

Authors' Note: Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Atsuko Seto, Department of Counselor Education, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ 08628-0718; e-mail: seto@tcnj.edu.

an example of an assessment and subsequent treatment interventions that consider the acculturation issues and needs of a Japanese immigrant family. The case scenario depicts the "Wada" family and their struggles with a recent move to the United States. The story of the Wada family was constructed based on the authors' experiences in counseling and consulting with Japanese populations. Through a case conceptualization of this composite family, relational and individual dynamics of traditional Japanese families, as well as cultural values, are discussed. Although the Wada family was based on an amalgam of counseling experiences, the article is written in a manner that portrays how an actual counseling process with this family would unfold.

CASE BACKGROUND

The Wada family was initially referred to a female therapist in a local mental health agency. The therapist learned more about the family through an initial intake assessment by exploring family history and the reasons for immigration. During this process, she realized that this family was experiencing conflict around issues of acculturation. The following is a summary of the family history and the development of the problem that led the family to seek counseling services.

Family History

The Wada family consisted of a 46-year-old father (Takeo), a 43-year-old mother (Kiyomi), a 19-year-old daughter (Yuki), a 16-year-old son (Yuta), and a 14-year-old son (Atsushi). Takeo (Mr. Wada) met Kiyomi (Mrs. Wada) through his boss. Takeo's boss was a good friend of Kiyomi's parents, who were looking to find a "decent gentleman" for Kiyomi. This Omiai (Japanese style of arranged marriage) was a success, and a year later, Takeo and Kiyomi were married. When they married, Mrs. Wada switched from full-time to part-time work so that she could welcome her husband home when he returned from work each day. When the couple had their first child, Yuki, Mrs. Wada decided to quit working altogether to stay home and take care of her daughter.

THE FAMILY JOURNAL: COUNSELING AND THERAPY FOR COUPLES AND FAMILIES, Vol. 15 No. 2, April 2007 167-173

DOI: 10.1177/1066480706297958

© 2007 Sage Publications

By the time their second child, Yuta, was born, Mr. Wada had climbed up the corporate ladder at a travel agency and was promoted to the position of manager. He worked overtime and hardly spent time with his family. While her husband devoted his time to work to provide his family with financial security, Mrs. Wada focused on taking care of her children and helping her in-laws who lived close by. She offered them support whenever they called her for assistance. Two years after their youngest child, Atsushi, was born, the family moved into a house. Building a house had been the couple's dream, and everyone in the family seemed to be excited about their new home. Several years later, Mr. Wada accepted an executive position to manage a travel agency in an urban area of the East Coast of the United States, which led to the family's current living situation.

Their oldest daughter, Yuki, remained in Japan because she had been accepted to a university in Tokyo. The rest of the family moved overseas with the knowledge that Mr. Wada's current work contract would be for a minimum of 4 years and that his relocation to the States could be extended based on his work performance at his new position. Mr. Wada thought that this promotion was a great opportunity for his career and that his wife and younger children could learn valuable lessons by living abroad. Mr. Wada received 6 months of intense language training prior to his move. Both Yuta and Atsushi had taken some English classes in their schools, and Mrs. Wada had been in the United States twice as a tourist. Each family member had some exposure to the English language and American culture while they lived in Japan. However, no one had sufficient language proficiency or practical living skills when they first arrived at their new home in the United States approximately 1 year prior to the initiation of counseling.

Development of the Presenting Concern

Mrs. Wada initiated family therapy because she was concerned about her children, especially her oldest son, Yuta. According to Mrs. Wada, Yuta's school counselor, Ms. Morris, encouraged her to consider seeking counseling services to help Yuta and to strengthen the parent-child relationship. In the current school, Yuta appeared to be exceptionally quiet and withdrawn, and his academic performance was suffering. In fact, his current grades were well below those reflected in his past transcripts. In Japan, Yuta was a straight-A student who attended Juku (a preparatory school for high school or college entrance exams) twice a week, including Friday evenings and on Saturday afternoons. During the first term of school in America, Yuta's teachers expressed several areas of concern. As mentioned, Yuta remained withdrawn from his peers (e.g., sitting alone during lunch period, initiating no involvement in extracurricular activities) despite the efforts by his teachers to help him adjust to his new academic environment. When Ms. Morris (school counselor) asked Yuta about his current grades and peer relationships, he said with teary eyes, "Everything is so different, and I don't know what to do." Yuta

further stated that he was embarrassed by his grades and felt that he was a disappointment to his parents. His younger brother, Atsushi, also struggled with his academic performance but seemed to be making some friends at his new school. Although Yuta was happy for his younger brother, he remembered feeling lonely when he saw Atsushi receiving his first invitation to a friend's birthday party.

At home, Yuta often heard his mother's worries about her family in Japan and about his father's spending too much time at work. His mother spent most of the day alone at home and rarely socialized with her neighbors. With an agreement from Yuta, Ms. Morris contacted Mrs. Wada and suggested a meeting with her and her son at the school. Mrs. Wada agreed to a meeting and apologized for not being able to come to school without having her husband give her a ride. Because the parents could only be available after school hours, Ms. Morris mentioned to Mrs. Wada that a list of counseling referrals in the area could be provided that might be helpful for her son and the whole family.

FAMILY ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO THE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL VALUES

While acknowledging the uniqueness of each family, being aware of cultural norms was essential to conduct a thorough assessment. Such awareness helped the counselor to understand the family by appropriately taking culturally specific factors into consideration. With the Wada family, several family themes, patterns of interactions, and structural observations from the case study could be understood through their cultural lens, specifically Japanese cultural and family practice. In this section, several cultural factors and their relevance to the Wada family are discussed.

Family Roles

Western influence brought gender equality to Japanese society; however, the traditional roles of men and women within a family structure seem to remain intact in much of contemporary Japanese society (Tamura, 2003). Fathers often assume responsibility to provide the financial resources for their families, whereas mothers are expected to maintain domestic chores in their role as housewife (Ishii-Kuntz & Maryanski, 2003). A family structure involving an absent father and an overly involved mother may be considered a cultural norm in Japan (Tamura, 2003). Mothers tend to become the primary caretaker for their children, whereas fathers are less involved with childrearing responsibilities (Nishioka Rice, 2001; Tamura, 2003). Consequently, the mother-child relationship is emphasized more than other relationships, such as father-child or wife-husband relationships (Tamura & Lau, 1999). In addition, generational and gender hierarchy within a traditional family implies that younger generations are expected to be obedient to older generations and that a wife is to be submissive to her husband (Tamura & Lau, 1999).

Mr. and Mrs. Wada fit into the roles of the traditional marital and parental dyad. Mrs. Wada ascribed to the roles of caretaker and strived to become a better mother to her children, whereas Mr. Wada was focused on his career. Through his eyes, he might have been an extremely dedicated father who provided continued financial security to his family. The hierarchy of the family was more egalitarian in that the family has left their older parents in Japan and allowed their daughter to reside in Tokyo to pursue her educational goals. However, the gender hierarchy within a marital dyad seemed to be consistent with the traditional practices.

Gender Roles

Japanese women may identify their self-worth in relation to their ascribed roles (Nishioka Rice, 2001). For example, a woman may evaluate her self-worth based on her parenting ability. As implied in the term *Kosodate mama* (childrearing mother), motherhood is one of the most important roles in a woman's life (Nishioka Rice, 2001). In addition to childrearing, women often become primary caretakers to their aging parents as well as in-laws. Because the roles of caregivers are culturally attributed to women (Hashizume, 2000; Yamamoto-Mitani et al., 2003), it is not uncommon for them to perceive the caretaking responsibilities as a priority and their individual needs (e.g., career) as secondary.

Until the early 1990s, men's identity and status were greatly weighted on their career achievement (Tamura, 2003). This gender expectation explains men's tendency to devote much of their time at work as well as socializing with their coworkers. Although the traditional view of fatherhood has been changing in contemporary Japan, many fathers struggle to find their place in the family. In a study of parenthood in Japan, more than 80% of fathers with preschool-aged children reported that they considered the role of father as their first or second priority over roles of husband or businessman. However, the study also revealed that 76% of fathers described their parental involvement as "not so active" to "not active" (Shwalb, Kawai, Shoji, & Tsunetsugu, 1997). Because many families have adopted the norm of an absent father into their family structure, making adjustments to increase the father's involvement is often a difficult task (Tamura, 2003).

Mr. Wada seemed to measure his self-worth based on his career achievements. He was willing to move to a foreign country to achieve higher career aspirations and provide the family with stable financial security. It was not clear how his sons perceived their father's career success. Instead of admiring their father, they might have felt resentment toward his choice of relocating to a foreign country where they had to start from scratch to make friends, learn the language, and adjust to a different lifestyle. Mrs. Wada continued to be a primary caretaker of her family; however, she had fewer people in whom to direct her attention because her daughter, parents, and in-laws now lived at such a distance. This change affected her view of herself as she felt that she was no longer needed by her family members or felt guilty for not providing appropriate care for them.

Youth and the Japanese Educational System

Academic accomplishment is highly valued in Japanese school systems (Tamura, 2003). Pressure to excel academically can start as early as kindergarten or elementary school level. Although many students may succeed in a competitive educational system, others struggle to meet the expectations of parents, schools, and the society. The age of youth who engage in delinquent behaviors has lowered significantly, and these behaviors have been observed among students of various socioeconomic status (Sugiyama, 2002). Sugiyama further explained that students who lack skills to release their stress are likely to engage in problem behaviors. School refusal has become one of the most prominent issues among children and adolescents in Japan (Kameguchi & Murphy-Shigematsu, 2001). Factors associated with this phenomenon include strict rules put on students, the students' inability to socialize with their peers (Tamura, 2003), and conflicts with teachers and peers at school (Miura, 2002). An educational system that expects homogeneity and highly values academic excellence has hindered child well-being (Kameguchi & Murphy-Shigematsu, 2001). Although many children prosper in their academic work, their inability to cope with emotional distress is manifested in various behavioral problems.

Low levels of acculturation and language acquisition seemed to contribute to the difficulties that their sons, especially Yuta, were experiencing at their schools. It is possible that Yuta had focused primarily on achieving his academic goals and lacked interpersonal skills while he attended school in Japan. Getting lower grades in his current school in the United States might have affected Yuta's self-esteem and hopes for his future. If Yuta and Atsushi had planned on going back to Japan for their college education, they would have needed to prepare for the entrance examinations in addition to their schooling. Because the level of one's educational attainment could have a great influence on financial stability in adult life, the parents were concerned for their sons in terms of their need to maintain high academic achievements. Unfortunately, Yuta was struggling to establish peer support and felt unsure about his future because of his declining grades. Going through the adolescent period without his friends and familiar surroundings also added stress to an already difficult acculturation process.

Value Orientation—"Tatemae" vs. "Honne"

There are two dichotomous words that describe a behavior pattern and a mindset of many Japanese families in terms of reinforcing the practice of keeping their issues private. They are *Tatemae* and *Honne*. *Tatemae* is "the general consensus of a group to which one belongs" (Shimizu, 2001, p. 10), whereas *honne* is a person's true thoughts and feelings behind *tatemae* (Shimizu, 2001). People often do not express their *honne* to maintain group conformity that is valued in a collectivist-oriented Japanese society (Doi, 1986, as cited in Shimizu, 2001). Therefore, it may be common for Japanese

clients to only tell their counselors about what they are supposed to say so that they are conforming to the norms (*tatema*), instead of telling their counselors about what they truly think or feel (*honne*). Such a cultural practice may be perceived as uncertain, reserved, or inauthentic in Western society. However, expressing one's true thoughts and feelings with others may not be accepted in Japanese culture as much as it is in the mainstream culture in the United States. Connectedness within relationships is considered more essential than individuation or separateness from one's family (Tamura & Lau, 1999). Therefore, the focus of communication may be to maintain harmony or find common areas of agreement rather than stating one's opinions that may deviate from the norms of the family or society.

Prior to the family's relocation to the United States, Mrs. Wada might have experienced accumulated stressors with Yuki's college entrance exam looming, Mr. Wada's long hours at work, and her responsibilities to care for her parents-in-laws. Mrs. Wada might have kept her *honne* (true thoughts and feelings) to maintain the family integrity and Mr. Wada's image of a successful businessman. Doing so allowed the Wada family to avoid becoming a disruption to the community and maintain their image of an ideal Japanese family: a successful father, well-behaved children, and a caring mother living in a single family home. As the family moved to America, each member has experienced added stress on a daily basis. However, everyone kept his or her true thoughts and feelings private to maintain the dignity of the family.

FAMILY ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO THE IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Impact of Immigration on Psychological Well-Being

Japanese immigrants can be classified into three distinctive categories, including those who arrived at the United States prior to World War II or after World War II and those who brought their families because of a business contract (Matsuyoshi, 2001). According to Matsuyoshi, those families who temporarily immigrated to the United States because of work-related obligations often desire to maintain cultural traditions with a plan of returning to Japan. Through the assessment of the Wada family, identifying their desires to maintain Japanese practice as well as acquiring skills to live in a new environment was crucial. Because the family's stay in the United States could be extended based on Mr. Wada's work accomplishments, Mr. and Mrs. Wada were concerned about their sons' future academic plans or responsibilities to take care of their aging parents in Japan. Therefore, it was important to explore how each family member was coping with physical distance and perceived emotional disconnectness from other family members who reside in Japan. In addition, assessing the levels of anxiety associated with the future of the family or individual was imperative.

Japanese mothers of immigrant families who lack language proficiency of the host country tend to experience social and emotional isolation. Similar concerns were also

reported by women with husbands who spend long hours at work (Vogel, 1986, as cited in Ishizaki & Ishizaki, 2001). In their study, Ishizaki and Ishizaki (2001) found significant relationship between mild psychiatric symptoms observed in mothers and depressive symptoms and anxiety in their children. Several explanations for the study outcome were discussed in their article (Ishizaki & Ishizaki, 2001). This finding raised important concerns for the Wada family. First, Mrs. Wada might have been experiencing increased psychological distress and therefore could have been susceptible to mental illnesses. Second, Yuta and Atsushi might have been at higher risk of developing depressive symptoms or anxiety because of acculturative stress and strained parent-child relationships. Without appropriate interventions, both children and their mother might have suffered from prolonged psychological distress, whereas the father's role in this scenario could have remained largely unnoticed in the family.

The studies of Japanese youth who live abroad also addressed the need for more support in helping them with a smoother acculturation process. In a qualitative study of eight Japanese immigrant youth ranging in age from 14 to 19, Yeh et al. (2003) reported that more than half of the participants perceived their experience in the United States as positive in general. However, many also reported struggling with a lack of English proficiency. These struggles included academic concerns as well as difficulty in maintaining friendships. When experiencing these challenges, many of the youth kept problems to themselves or sought support from friends who had similar concerns (Yeh et al., 2003). Another study (Yeh & Inose, 2002) also described the challenges that Japanese immigrant youth faced. When compared to Chinese or Korean counterparts, Japanese youth experienced more difficulties with interpersonal relationships. According to Yeh and Inose (2002), differences in interaction styles of Japanese and Western cultures as well as a focus on interconnectedness over individualistic orientation may be contributing factors. These findings suggest the importance of providing support that helps youth enhance social and emotional functioning. In relation to the Wada family, it was important for the assessment to explore the comfort level of Yuta and Atsushi when speaking in English as well as their language acquisition and skills for interpersonal communication.

ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO THE FAMILY BOUNDARIES

Counselors who are trained in Western theories may be inclined to hypothesize that the mother-child relationships are enmeshed, and the father-child relationships are rigid. As we shifted our focus to understand Japanese family systems, we surmised their family boundaries as follows. Mrs. Wada's overinvolvement and Mr. Wada's lack of involvement with their children was understood as the commonly practiced boundaries in Japanese families. Boundaries between the younger generation (sons) and the older generation (parents) also tended to be more hierarchical, and this pattern seemed to be

consistent with a traditional family structure. Acknowledging the cultural norms may not mean that the family has healthy boundaries. Rather, such an acknowledgement could be an indication of the counselor's ability and willingness to provide appropriate counseling interventions that considers the family's cultural practice. As the family felt understood within their cultural context, they were more open to discuss what they considered "close" or "distant" boundaries and what they needed to do to establish desirable parent-child relationships.

Within traditional Japanese cultural norms, the marital dyad is considered secondary to the parental dyad. Japanese culture values a parent-child relationship as the most essential entity (Tamura, 2003) and considers that "the marriage is primarily a partnership for raising children rather than a personal relationship meant to fulfill psychological needs of the mates" (Bell & Bell, 2000, p. 309). The boundary within the marital dyad could have become more strained as both Mr. Wada and Mrs. Wada felt less adequate in their ability to function as parents. In addition, traditional hierarchy within this dyad (Mr. Wada as the head of the house and Mrs. Wada as a supportive wife) might have required some shifts. As the family moved to the United States, it became clear that Mrs. Wada needed more involvement from Mr. Wada while going through adjustments to a new environment. Unlike in Japan, Mrs. Wada needed to care for her family without the resources to which she was accustomed. This lack of established support and resources put Mrs. Wada in a vulnerable position and increased her desire to feel more connected with her primary support—Mr. Wada.

ASSESSMENT IN RELATION TO THE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

When the family moved to the United States, they lost their primary support systems, which included their relatives and friends. Although Mr. Wada had an opportunity through his work at a Japanese-English-speaking travel agency to have social supports, Mrs. Wada had minimal access to social interaction or community resources. Because she was unsure about her ability to drive on roads in the United States, she learned to manage most of her shopping within walking distance of their home. Additionally, Mrs. Wada's minimal involvement in her sons' schools might have led her to try to gain necessary information about their school experiences from her sons, which overwhelmed and frustrated them. Both Yuta and Atsushi experienced tremendous challenges in trying to make academic and social adjustments at their schools. Most important, the family experienced these losses in a new cultural environment, which magnified the degree of their isolation and frustration.

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE COUNSELING PROCESS

Engaging the Wada Family

The initial stage of the counseling sessions started with an exchange of a bow between the parents and the counselor as

the indication of respect. The Wada family, especially Mr. and Mrs. Wada, carefully screened what they said to maintain the dignity of their family as well as the harmony in a counseling room. Rather than labeling these behaviors as "resistant" or "being in denial," the counselor approached the family by complementing everyone's willingness to work together. The counselor focused on joining with the Wada family by acknowledging the hierarchy of the family as well as asking them about things that they had enjoyed about America and things that they had missed about Japan. She also shared her understanding of counseling development in Japan and invited the family to share with her about their expectations toward receiving counseling services.

To encourage everyone's participation in setting goals, the counselor incorporated some Japanese traditions into the therapeutic process. For example, an activity that was borrowed from a Japanese festival, called *Tanabata*, was created to invite each family member to participate in the initial goal setting. The counselor distributed rectangular-shaped colored papers by calling them "*Tanzaku*" and then asked the family to think of their wishes for themselves as well as for the family and to write each down on the *Tanzaku*. In addition to the wishes from the family, the counselor wrote her wishes for the family, which allowed her to provide concrete feedback in a more structured and caring manner. All wishes then were shared with the whole family to begin developing individual and family goals.

Dealing With Family and Interpersonal Problems

Each family member was coping with stressors related to his or her adjustment process into a new environment. As the family generated their "wish list," the counselor took the lead to help them classify their wishes into certain categories to make them more concrete and attainable for the family. In so doing, the family members could identify common issues, prioritize the goals, and develop specific ways to work as a family. For example, with the Wada family, to help the family better cope with acculturation stresses, the roles of the parents were explored with respect to traditional gender expectations and hierarchy while also acknowledging the impact of acculturative stressors on parent-child relationships. Instead of discussing the reason why Mr. Wada was unavailable to the family, the family was asked to identify specific contributions he made to keep them together. Furthermore, the family explored additional ways that they needed their father's involvement or leadership to strengthen the family ties in their new surroundings. Similarly, the family was encouraged to explore ways in which Mrs. Wada could be caring to them. Identifying specifics of her caretaker roles was consistent with the traditional family structure while helping Mrs. Wada to make necessary modifications to provide the care to meet the current needs of the family. Mr. and Mrs. Wada were able to listen to what their children needed from them without the feelings of embarrassment, because the counselor focused on the strengths of both the children and the entire family

(instead of what the parents were not providing), which lessened the anxiety and helped to facilitate optimal adjustment to their new environment.

To strengthen the parental unit, the couple was encouraged to work as a team to provide their sons with increased resources. Emphasizing the importance of parental functioning was more culturally preferred because the parent-child relationships seem to be considered essential in a traditional Japanese family structure. Because Mrs. Wada could not drive at that point, the couple was asked to find alternative forms of transportation. The couple was also asked to explore the area within 10 miles of their residence to see what types of resources they could "discover" that would be helpful for their sons and the entire family. With the support of their counselor, this process of discovery increased their confidence and capability as parents while also helping them to connect as a marital dyad. As each family member felt more confident and familiar with his or her surroundings, the whole family seemed to develop more functional lifestyles in their host culture.

Support Network and Community Resources

The family benefited from keeping close ties with their ethnic roots while also increasing the support network and learning how to use existing community resources. In doing so, the family created some stability in their new bicultural environment that maintained strong family ties as well as fostered the family's ability to connect with their community. Examples of resources that were explored in session to help promote Japanese culture included weekend Japanese schools for children, local Japanese organizations, and shops that carried a variety of Japanese items. Additionally, mentors and tutors who were familiar with Japanese culture or who were of Japanese descent were sought to help the sons to develop optimal bicultural identity. In terms of supporting the family to have more positive exposure to the host culture, they considered taking ESL classes, participating in various cultural events (both Japanese and other cultures) in their community, and having a family outing. Simple things such as going out for dinner or to a movie seemed to help the family to boost their confidence level as they learned about new cultures and enhanced their English-language proficiency, while enjoying togetherness as a family.

Finally, it was empowering to Mrs. Wada to identify some activities that encouraged her participation in the community and promoted her self-value of being an excellent caretaker. For example, she found a school where she could volunteer as a Japanese-language tutor. She also took cooking classes through an outreach program to add new recipes for the family.

CONCLUSION

This article discussed traditional cultural values and family structures that are helpful in understanding recent Japanese

immigrant families to the United States. A culturally sensitive case conceptualization and an example of the counseling process were offered. To build a strong rapport, counselors need to demonstrate their credibility by providing their educational background, relevant credentials, and expertise with this population. Doing so may help counselors avoid any biases associated with gender or age hierarchy that could be barriers in the counseling process. To some Japanese families, seeking professional help can mean "an admission of failure" (Matsuyoshi, 2001, p. 406) as doing so may contradict traditional cultural values. Therefore, counselors need to normalize the family's concerns (e.g., it is common to experience acculturative stresses) and affirm the family's strengths to seek professional help while developing a strong rapport with the family. In addition, having the involvement of fathers in therapy may be extremely rare (Tamura, 2003). To encourage the participation of the fathers, acknowledging traditional role expectations of parents while also supporting the family to adapt to an increased involvement of the father is essential. It is our hope that this case study has illustrated the needs of these families and the importance of initiations by professionals to provide multifaceted services to promote optimal outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Bell, L. G., & Bell, D. C. (2000). Japanese and U.S. marriage experiences: Traditional and non-traditional perceptions of family [electronic version]. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 31(3), 309-319.
- Chang, T. H., & Yeh, R. L. (1999). Theoretical framework for therapy with Asian families. In K. S. Ng (Ed.), *Counseling Asian families from a systems perspective* (pp. 3-13). Alexandria: American Counseling Association.
- Hashizume, Y. (2000). Gender issues and Japanese family-centered caregiving for frail elderly parents or parents-in-law in modern Japan: From the sociocultural and historical perspectives. *Public Health Nursing*, 17(1), 25-31.
- Ishii-Kuntz, M., & Maryanski, A. R. (2003). Conjugal roles and social networks in Japanese families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 24(3), 353-380.
- Ishizaki, Y., & Ishizaki, T. (2001). Psychosocial association of Japanese mothers and their children when living temporarily abroad. *School Psychology International*, 22(1), 29-42.
- Kameguchi, K., & Murphy-Shigematsu, S. (2001). Family psychology and family therapy in Japan. *American Psychologist*, 56, 65-70.
- Matsuyoshi, J. (2001). Substance abuse interventions for Japanese and Japanese American clients. In S. L. A. Straussner (Ed.), *Ethnocultural factors in substance abuse treatment* (pp. 393-417). New York: Guilford.
- Miura, M. (2002). 不登校 [School truancy/refusal] In I. Agari (Ed.), *これから始める臨床心理学 [Beginning clinical psychology]* (pp. 114-128). Kyoto, Japan: 昭文堂.
- Nishioka Rice, Y. (2001). The maternal role in Japan: Cultural values and socioeconomic conditions. In H. Shimizu & R. A. LeVine (Eds.), *Japanese frames of mind: Cultural perspectives on human development* (pp. 85-110). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Shimizu, H. (2001). Japanese cultural psychology and empathic understanding: Implications for academic and cultural psychology. In H. Shimizu & R. A. LeVine (Eds.), *Japanese frames of mind: Cultural perspectives on human development* (pp. 10-26). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Shwalb, D. W., Kawai, H., Shoji, J., & Tsunetsugu, K. (1997). The middle class Japanese father: A survey of parents of preschoolers. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 18*, 497-511.
- Sue, D. (1998). The interplay of sociocultural factors on the psychological development of Asians in America. In D. R. Atkinson., G. Morten., & D. W. Sue (Eds.), *Counseling American minorities* (5th ed., pp. 205-213). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Sugiyama, M. (2002). 非行、不良行為 [Delinquent and juvenile behaviors]. In I. Agari (Ed.), *これから始める臨床心理学 [Beginning clinical psychology]* (pp. 101-112). Kyoto, Japan: 昭和堂.
- Tamura, T. (2003). The development of family therapy and the experience of fatherhood in the Japanese context. In K. S. Ng. (Ed.), *Global perspectives in family therapy: Development, practice, and trends* (pp. 19-30). New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Tamura, T., & Lau, A. (1999). Connectedness versus separateness: Applicability of family therapy to Japanese families. In K. S. Ng (Ed.), *Counseling Asian families from a systems perspective* (pp. 95-125). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Yamamoto-Mitani, N., Ishigaki, K., Kawahara-Maekawa., N., Kuniyoshi, M., Hayashi, K., Hasegawa, K., et al. (2003). Factors of positive appraisal of care among Japanese family caregivers of older adults. *Research in Nursing and Health, 26*, 337-350.
- Yeh, C. J. (2003). Age, acculturation, cultural adjustment, and mental health symptoms of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese immigrant youths [electronic version]. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 9*, 34-48.
- Yeh, C. J., Arora, A. K., Inose, M., Okubo, Y., Li, R. H., & Greene, P. (2003). The cultural adjustment and mental health of Japanese immigrant youth [electronic version]. *Adolescence, 38*, 481-500.
- Yeh, C., & Inose, M. (2002). Difficulties and coping strategies of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrant students [electronic version]. *Adolescence, 37*, 69-82.

Atsuko Seto is an assistant professor and a community counseling program coordinator for the Department of Counselor Education at the College of New Jersey. Her research interests include multicultural counseling and training, use of creativity, and family counseling.

Mark S. Woodford is an assistant professor and chairperson for the Department of Counselor Education at the College of New Jersey. His research interests are in the fields of substance abuse and family counseling.