Chapter 6
Japanese Families in the United States

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Abstract This chapter will examine Japanese families living in North American, specifically in the United States. This chapter will focus on a discussion of the movement of Japanese families to North America in the later part of the twentieth century due to the globalization of the Japanese economy. After providing a brief history of Japan and discussing trends in marriage and family within Japanese society, this chapter will discuss the impacts that Japanese families' migration to the United States has had on cross-cultural socialization, interracial marriages and children, education, and career choices. The impacts of socialization into multiple ethnic and national groups on identity formation will also be explored. This chapter will conclude with suggestions for further research and implications for educators, counselors, and social workers.

Keywords Japanese families · Cross-cultural socialization · Japanese marriage and children · Japanese education and career choices · Identity

Japan is a society of "old world traditions" and "modernization and globalization." Japan is an archipelago and part of East Asia. It is a society dating back to the first century AD and discovered by Chinese monks, and many Chinese influences are still present in contemporary Japanese society (Rogers, 2005). While there are various regional dialects, Japanese with the standard Tokyo dialect is spoken throughout Japan. The mixture of ancient Chinese kanji is used in conjunction with Japanese hiragana and katakana and the Roman alphabet as the Romanization of Japanese words is becoming increasingly used in Japanese discourse (Rogers, 2005).

Japan is currently an industrialized, free market economy, which has shown mostly decreases, with slight increases, in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth in the early part of the twenty-first century. Japan's economy is built on the electronic and automotive industries. With the hit in global markets in 2009, Japan's GDP dropped to a historically low growth rate of −4%. It increased between the

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years of 2010–2011 to 4.7% and then dropped in 2011 to −0.6% (The Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2013).

While Japan is a nation that proudly holds onto tradition, it is also one that is undergoing many ideological struggles related to old and new world ideals with the increasing globalization of its economy. These ideological struggles between that represent tradition and modernization are evolving the ways in which Japanese society is defining family, marriage, gender roles, and education (Makino, 2006; Takahashi, 2013). Reinvention and resistance frame the ways in which Japanese men and women think about marriage, gender equality, social class, and educational and job opportunities. Japanese families are in transition as mothers and fathers redefine their roles and responsibilities in the home and at work, and this redefinition has larger implications on fertility rates in relation to an ageing society and a declining population (Ishii-Kuntz, Makino, Kato, & Tsuchiya, 2004; Ogawa, 2007).

This chapter will discuss the relationships between changes in Japanese society, as part of its globalizing economy, and Japanese migration and families living in North America, specifically in the United States. This chapter is not designed to provide a comprehensive overview of these relationships. Rather, it will present trends and themes for further investigation and research. This chapter will conclude with the implications that an evolving Japanese society has for educators, counselors, and social workers.

Demographics of Japan and Japanese Migration to North America

According to the United Nations Population and Vital Statistics Report (2013), Japan has a population of 128,057,352, with 62,327,737 reported males and 65,729,615 reported females. In 2010, Japan had 1,071,304 reported births (a rate of 8.4) and 1,197,012 reported deaths (a rate of 9.8). Japan has a low infant mortality rate, which the UN reports as 2.2. The life expectancy of Japanese individuals is one of the highest around the world. The life expectancy for men is 80 years, while for women it is 86.9 years. These statistics suggest several natural trends in Japanese society. Even with the low infant mortality rate, Japan's population is declining as the death rate exceeds the birth rate. The United Nations report rates Japan's population growth at −1.4 (The United Nations Population and Vital Statistics Report, 2013). At the same time, Japan's population is not getting younger, but instead is getting older as the life expectancy increases. Finally, with the number of females exceeding the number of males, there are a larger percentage of females not marrying and creating different life courses other than domestic life (Makino, 2006).

Based on the 2010 United States Census, Asian immigration is rapidly increasing (The United States Census Bureau, 2010). Conducted every 10 years, the U.S. Census found that the Asian population increased by 43% between 2000 and 2010. This increase was more than that of other groups. Between those same years,

immigration patterns of Japanese individuals showed that there was a decrease in individuals who reported themselves as Japanese as one race (−1.2%), while individuals reporting themselves as Japanese and another race increased by 55.9% and Japanese and another Asian population (i.e., Korean, Filpino) increased by 13.5%. These trends in percentages show changes in the Japanese population living in the United States (The United States Census Bureau, 2010).

While immigration patterns of Japanese-only individuals appear to be decreasing, there are large increases in mixed-race Japanese individuals living in the United States (The United States Census Bureau, 2010). While this may be the case, very little research has been conducted on these groups of individuals. Terminology, socialization patterns, sociocultural and linguistic identities, and language maintenance are critical issues that need further exploration but the current body of research has done little to improve our understandings of Japanese individuals living in counties like the United States.

Japanese Families

According to the United Nations Population and Vital Statistics Report (2013), in 1970, nearly 99% of Japanese men and 95% of Japanese women were married. This percentage decreased for men and women in 2010 when 79% of Japanese men and 88% of women reported to be married. The age of marriage is getting later in Japan. Men tend to marry between the ages of 25 and 34, and women tend to marry between the ages of 25 and 39. The divorce rate is 36% with the highest number of divorces among individuals married between 5 and 9 years or 20 years and more. Japan has a lower percentage of single-parent homes than most Western countries (Makino et al., 2008).

Japanese families tend to be extended families composed of a husband, a wife, children, and grandparents (the parents of generally the husband's family) (Ogawa, 2007). Recently, the extended family organization is becoming less common, while the idea that "Men for work and women for home," or "Man is a bread winner and woman is a consumer" continues to be rooted in Japanese society (Ogawa, 2007). Marriage, traditionally, is an assumed institution that both men and women are expected to enter into so that Japanese society differentiates between "love marriages," or *renai-kekkon*, and arranged marriages, or *omiyai-kekkon* (Takahashi, 2013).

Researchers argue that the nature and composition of Japanese families are changing (Makino et al., 2008). Makino (2006) suggests that there is a declining number of household members, an increasing number of single households, and a declining fertility rate. More Japanese individuals, particularly women, are deciding to forgo marriage and children (Makino, 2006). Researchers suggest that these trends, particularly the declining fertility rate, are related to a gender ideology (Ogawa, 2007; Takahashi, 2013). Recent reporting in the *New York Times* suggests that these trends have persisted in Japan over time (Rich, 2019, 2020).

Makino (2006) argues that women's anxiety over raising children is increasing. Within the ideology of "wife as home-maker" and "husband as breadwinner," women spend more hours in the home with children while husbands spend more hours at work. Ishii-Kuntz et al. (2004) found that men's decreased parental involvement was related to long work hours and time availability, particularly in a country where paternal leave is not as popular as in countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and Sweden, one of the first countries to initiate the leave (Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007).

The time that Japanese fathers spend on child-rearing activities is lower than other countries like the United States and France. Makino et al. (2008) suggested that 85.9% of child-rearing activities were the responsibility of the mother and 2.5% were conducted by the father. In Sweden, for example, they found that 16% of the child-rearing activities were conducted by the father and 30% were conducted by both. Researchers argue that Japanese mothers are feeling more daily stress and are finding less enjoyment in child-rearing (Raymo, Iwasawa, & Bumpass, 2009).

Researchers credit the shift to late marriage, particularly among educated women, to women desiring economic and professional independence (Raymo & Iwasawa, 2005). Raymo and Iwasawa (2005) generated the "marriage market mismatch hypothesis," which proposes that declines in marriage rates are due to "marriage mismatch," during which educated women are opting to stay in the workforce. At the same time, the numbers of available educated, single men are declining. In addition, with the decline of arranged marriages from 63% in 1955 to 2% in 2002, men and women are looking for their own spouses (Ogawa, 2007). Results from Raymo and Iwasawa's study (2005) study found that one-fourth of declining marriage rates was due to the lack of availability of potential spouses. They concluded that the marriage mismatch was due to an "educational mismatch" between potential marriage partners as women want to be educated and dependent on their spouses for economic stability. Women are attempting to create more desirable life courses during which they can manage both work and family (Kaneko et al., 2008).

This trend is occurring simultaneously with new divorce rates. The number of divorces is steadily increasing in Japan and researchers indicated that the highest rates of divorce are occurring among couples with lower levels of education. Until recently, little has been known about divorce in Japan, partly due to the fact that the idea of divorce is taboo in Japanese society. While in the United States divorce is considered a private matter, in Japan it becomes a public one often leading to social ridicule or isolation among women and negative ramifications within the work setting for men (Raymo, Iwasawa, & Bumpass, 2004).

Japanese families have slightly different views of the roles and relationships of family members than families from Western cultures (Kelsky, 2001). With strong gendered ideologies, Japanese parents tend to take on role specific responsibilities. More equal distribution of family participation is seen as unnecessary in Japanese thought, but is seen as a critical one in Western thought (Kelsky, 2001). Researchers contend that the influences of globalization and Western ideologies are now affecting these gendered ideologies (Takahashi, 2013).

The access to popular culture through movies, television, music, and advertisements and the privileging of English as access to Western principles creates

romanticized ideals of the roles of men and women within society and the family (Takahashi, 2013). The following section will further explore the impact of globalization on gendered ideologies in Japanese society.

Economic Globalization and Japanese Migration to North America

Historically, Japan has a strong ethnonational, monolingual identity that privileges a homogenous society. This pre-war ideology, also described as Nihonjinron ideology, continued into the twentieth century and through increased globalization that resulted in the "Bubble Economy" in the 1980's and 1990's. It was during this time that North America experienced an increased shift in Japanese migration (Kamada, 2010). The growing dominance of the Japanese industrialized, free market economy led to a rise in international migration patterns of Japanese individuals as the Japanese economy flourished.

During the time of Japan's growing economy in the 1990s, 258,247 Japanese nationals moved to North America, with Japanese nationals residing largely in the United States, according to the Japan Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of International Affairs and Communications (n.d.). In 2011, the number nearly doubled to 454,828, with the number of Japanese nationals residing in Canada doubling from 21,846 in 1990 to 56,891 in 2011 (Japan Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of International Affairs and Communications, n.d.). These numbers reported by the Statistics Bureau include not only Japanese nationals, but also permanent expatriates and those individuals holding dual citizenship.

One of the major impacts of globalization and the rise in international migration to North America is the positioning of English as a high status language (Kanno, 2008; Takahashi, 2013). Individuals in Japanese society who could speak, read, and write in English held privileged positions in Japan because language was viewed as providing access to international domains (Kanno, 2008). Evidence of the high interest in learning English is the increased numbers of English language schools, or *eikaiwa* schools, and study aboard programs, or *ryugaku*. Tsuda (2000) reported that the English language school industry in Japan reached approximately 1 trillon Yen. The Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), (2013) found that nearly 63,000 Japanese citizens went abroad for a tertiary education in 2010. The United States was the most popular destination followed by the United Kingdom and Australia (Takahashi, 2013).

In addition, international migration patterns have impacted Japanese families, resulting in an increased rate of chiyuzain, a general term used to describe individuals who along with their families moved to other countries for 3–5 years for work purposes (Kamada, 2010). While many chiyuzain families returned back to Japan, some did not–especially the families with children who attended North American universities. Researchers (e.g., Kamada, 2010; Takahashi, 2013) have documented the educational, linguistic, and sociocultural adjustments of children or adolescents who decided to stay in foreign countries, taking on mixed national identities, or

returned back to Japan and recaptured their Japanese national identity. Children of chiyuzain families do not feel acculturated into one particular society and lack feelings of belongingness because they are positioned as outsiders within Japanese culture and society to which their parents may belong (Kamada, 2010).

Transnational Generation of Families: Acculturation and Socialization

One of the consequences of the movement of families due to global economic expansion is the creation of transnational Japanese families. These families have unique characteristics and challenges because, as Zhou and Xiong (2007) argued, they can be caught between cultures, beliefs, and ideologies. As a transitional generation, the parental generations tend to hold onto and socialize their children through traditional values and beliefs of their native country that may support and/or contradict the cultural values of the areas in which they live (Zhou & Xiong, 2007).

Consequently, a review of the research suggests that defining a term like Japanese American is complex because these general terms may not address the distinctive characteristics and research needs of individuals across generations. For example, if a first generation mono-racial Japanese American man (generation 1) marries a Caucasian women and they have a biracial child (generation 2), then the intergenerational relationships between generation 1 and generation 2 can be qualitatively different than when a Japanese American mono-racial man marries a Japanese American mono-racial woman (both generation 1) and have a mono-racial Japanese American child (generation 2). Zhou and Xiong (2007) found that second generation children of immigrant families, such as the family in the latter scenario, reported more unequal treatment and identified themselves as "hyphenated" Asian Americans. Perhaps this is the case because second-generation Asian Americans are ambivalent towards prior generations due to cultural differences on how Japanese families view the roles and relationships of family members across generations.

Japanese American Families: Interracial Marriages and Children

With the rise in Japan's global economy and migration patterns to North America, the U.S. has experienced the largest increase in bi/multi-racial Japanese American families due the steady increase in international marriages (Le, 2014; Tsuneyoshi, 2011). According to Tsuneyoshi (2011), in 2008, about 5% of all marriages of Japanese nationals were international marriages as compared to 1965 when the percentage was 0.4%.

Researchers argue that this increase in interracial marriages coincides with the growing global dominance of the English language (Le, 2014; Takahashi, 2013). Japanese men are more likely to have Japanese spouses or other Asian spouses than

Japanese women (Le, 2014). Takahashi (2013) further explored the interracial marriages of Japanese women and found that learning English and the role of language ideologies played a significant role in interracial marriages. Takahashi (2013) argued that learning English is more than a psychological or economic motivation. Rather, it is also about agency and desire to acquire freedom from constraints within one's life course. Takahashi (2013) further argued that Japanese women's "romantic" attachment to English fueled their aspirations to develop relationships with Western men.

Child-Generations of Intermarriages

 Identity development of the biracial second generation children has been a topic of interest to researchers, although an under-researched topic. Within the population of Japanese Americans, linguistic, national, and cultural identity formation of the child-generation is often the result of children learning to find belongingness to particular linguistic and cultural communities (Kabuto, 2010; Kanno, 2003). Far less research has been conducted on how parental generations navigate the intersections of "Japanese" and "American" identities and how this navigation influences child-rearing practices and the socialization of their children into North American society.

Of particular interest are the ways in which biracial children are positioned with Japanese terminology, such as *hafuu* (meaning "half") or *daburu* (meaning "double"). Researchers argue that this type of terminology suggests a lack of wholeness in biracial identities that are sitting side-by-side rather than being integrated. (Collins, 2000; Kamada, 2010). In order to combat this arbitrary distinction in one's identity, Kamada (2010) discussed how biracial identities are hybrid identities, which are fluid, flexible, and negotiated. Biracial Japanese American children have the agency to select, explore and situationally use different aspects of their identity to gain access to, and power within, social structures and institutions (Collins, 2000; Kabuto, 2010; Kamada, 2010).

In one of the few studies on the development of biracial identities of children living in the United States, Collins (2000) proposes that biracial identities are undergoing constant changes and evolutions. Collins (2000) found that biracial Japanese American children went through four phases in their developing biracial identities. In phase I, children self-evaluated themselves, questioned who they are and expressed confusion when attempting to fit into a particular ethnic category. In phase II, children attempted to suppress parts of their identity. The process of suppression involved children looking for particular reference groups to belong to. For example, children living in mono-racially white communities attempted to reject their Japanese identity. In phase III, children explored parts of their identity in the attempt to reconcile contradictory and conflicting feelings about who they are as Japanese Americans. While Japanese American children may have previously attempted to reject one part of their identity, they now felt that they were not whole

and took action to find feelings of completeness. They traveled to Japan or moved to areas with large multicultural communities. Phase IV was defined as coming to a resolution and accepting their biracial identity.

Children find agency in using their identity to their advantage and acknowledge the shifting boundaries of their identity (Kanno, 2003). Contrarily, very few studies on the phases of identity development have been conducted on second generation mono-racial Japanese children living in North America, such as Japanese adolescents who acculturated into North American society and how they have navigated and developed bicultural, bilingual, and cross-national identities.

Education and Career Pathways

Japan's educational system is composed of both public and private schooling venues, and both receive financial support from the government. Japanese grade school levels are organized into kindergarten (3–6 years old), primary school (6–12 years old) and lower and upper secondary school (12–15 and 15–18 years old) (Kamada, 2010). Upper secondary school is a time for intense university preparation during which students prepare to take a variety of university exams. Unlike universities in countries like the United States and Canada, Japanese universities have their own unique exams required for entrance, and private university exams tend to be more competitive than public university exams (Kamada, 2010).

Parents, who immigrate to North American societies and are socialized into the Japanese educational system model with high levels of competition, place importance and emphasis on formal education, particularly for parents who have hopes of returning back to Japan (Kamada, 2010). Japanese supplementary schools, sometimes called heritage language schools, or hoshuko, have become a venue for Japanese children to receive an education in Japanese language skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing and Japanese math and history, as well as an education in Japanese values and culture. With the increase in Japanese nationals studying abroad and second generation Japanese returning back to Japan, the Japanese government supported schools furthering rapid in creating quick assimilation of Japanese returnee families into Japanese society (Kanno, 2008).

Kanno (2008) explored Japanese children who returned back to Japan as adolescents for a secondary education. She found that the returnees lacked both English language proficiency and Japanese language proficiency. The former caused adolescents not to fully enter into English dominant social groups, while the latter experienced difficult times in entering into and adjusting to the Japanese university system.

For many Japanese families, returning back to Japan so that their children can have a secondary education is often a top priority. Japan has a tradition of a "designated school" system, in which employers and secondary schools have a close relationship causing employers to select graduates exclusively from certain high schools. At the same time, secondary schools in Japan have a tracking system that

regulates students' job applications in relation to academic performance and will provide recommendations on post-secondary career paths. Consequently, Japanese American individuals who do not attend secondary schools or universities in Japan may find it difficult to enter into pathways for highly competitive companies and careers. Furthermore, without a long-term Japanese education, Japanese returnees may not have the language proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing needed for some career pathways, creating unequal job opportunities for Japanese Americans (Kamada, 2010).

Implications for Educators, Social Workers, and Psychologists

There are implications for educators, social workers, and psychologists, particularly on developing further research on how the migration of Japanese families to North America impacts the identities of Japanese families and their educational and career choices.

First, further research that tracks the social and economic trajectories of Japanese American families as they become more acculturated into Western society, particularly after the second generation, is needed. It is critical that educators and researchers continue to monitor and research how institutional structures related to work and school socialize Japanese families into values, beliefs, ideologies and socio-cultural and national identities connected to American society.

Second, further research is needed on the multi-faceted aspects of identity, as a dynamic and changing process, of Japanese families, particularly focusing on inter-racial families. Familiarity with the phases of identity development will allow professionals to assist children in critical times of need in developing a healthy self-concept (Collins, 2000). Specifically, in developing a healthy self-concept, Japanese Americans, particularly children of Japanese families who immigrated to the U.S., have a desire to find belongingness with other groups. Due to the collectivist nature of the Japanese culture, this process plays an important role in defining their identity (Collins, 2000; Silver, 2002). Providing or developing social support groups for Japanese Americans can assist in the acculturation process and in socializing children into positive self-evaluations of themselves.

Finally, there is limited research that explores Japanese Americans' career choices and their opportunities in the United States. There is a paucity of research on how individuals within Japanese American families navigate the employment system and the types of cultural capital needed to be successful in gaining and maintaining employment, the challenges of language proficiency, and the potential inequalities within the system that deters Japanese American families from finding employment. Further research in this area will assist in educational and career counseling needed for exploring a variety of career pathways.

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